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ORDERS

L. BACUEZ



MAJOR ORDERS.



BY

REV. LOUIS BACUEZ, S.S.

Author of the "Divine Office."



B. HERDER,

**17 SOUTH BROADWAY
ST. LOUIS, Mo.**

**68 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Seminarians, it is true, have but little time for private reading; yet we offer them this little volume in the hope that they will make its acquaintance and will be the better for it.

The various ordinations are capital events for them. Those to Sacred Orders decide their future and engage their entire life. These, above all, they must not receive without having given serious reflection to them. Ordinands need to know well what dispositions they require, what powers they confer, what virtues they suppose or exact and what obligations they impose. And to become thus enlightened and to ground one's self in these things a short retreat cannot suffice. These matters need to have been studied beforehand, thought upon in the presence of God and seriously. Should the time for this be lacking during the seminary year one can occupy himself therewith during vacation, and if one have not gone as thoroughly into these matters as he could have wished before ordination, he can come back to them afterwards. Even, it is

of serious moment that one return to them often; for there is always something to learn, some good to be gained thereby.

Our instructions, like the meditations, are as brief as possible. The reader is to expect of us indications only. It is our endeavor to arouse his attention, to direct his thoughts, to animate, enliven his faith and fervor. But it is for him to reflect, examine, appreciate and pray. If he desires to know the good pleasure of God, so that he may conform to it, the Holy Spirit will supplement our words in proportion to the ardor and purity of his desire: *Sapientia videtur facile ab his qui diligunt eam et invenitur ab his qui quaerunt illam.*¹

*Sacerdotes tui induantur justitiam, Domine, et sancti tui exsultent.*²

¹ Sap., vi, 13.

² Ps., cxxxix, 7.

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PART I.
INSTRUCTIONS ON MAJOR ORDERS.

THE SUBDIACONATE.

ARTICLE I.

ON THE ORDINATION OF SUBDEACONS.

I.

Subdeaconship, Deaconship and Priesthood differ greatly from the preceding Orders, whilst among themselves they are found to be more nearly akin. Naturally, then, they have been classed together and given a special designation. Thus, one often hears them spoken of as *Major Orders* by which is signified their superiority to the *Minor Orders* which precede them. The more common name given them, however, is *Sacred Orders*, and this for a two-fold reason: first, because they have as their purpose to bring those who receive them into intimate relation

with the most sacred objects of religion, the Body and Blood of the Savior, or at least the sacred vessels which contain these; secondly, because the recipients are, at the moment of receiving them, consecrated forever to the service of the altar.¹

From this it follows of course that clerics promoted to Sacred Orders acquire an increase of dignities and new powers. But at the same time they assume obligations correspondingly more grave. Wherefore the Church is cautious most in this that the Ordinandi give particular guarantees of maturity in science and in virtue.²

Moreover, the canons prescribe at what age the various Orders can be received: the Subdiaconate may not be received until one has reached the age of twenty-two; the Diaconate may be conferred on those who have attained their twenty-third year, while the canonical age for ordination to the Priesthood is twenty-four years. And even the very days

¹ ST. THOMAS, *Suppl.*, q. 37, a. 3, ad 2.

² Duo sacri ordines non eodem die etiam regularibus conferantur. CONC. TRID., *Sess. XXIII*, 11. Hi non nisi post annum a susceptione postremi promoveantur, nisi necessitas aut Ecclesiae utilitas, iudicio Episcopi, aliud exposcat. *IBID.* c. 11, 13, 14.

on which these orders may be conferred are determined by canon law: they are the Saturday Ember days, the vigil of Passion Sunday and the Saturday of Holy Week. Nor may any of these regulations be set aside unless by a dispensation from the Sovereign Pontiff. The ordinations themselves must take place during the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and, according to the rubrics, in a cathedral church after a convocation of the Chapter.

The practice of the Church today is such that the first of the Major Orders is taken with a view to the second, and the second with a view to the third, often only a brief period intervening. It would be well for the ordinandi therefore to keep them closely associated in their minds so that they may the better prepare for these successive steps.

II.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH IN FIXING SPECIAL SEASONS AND DAYS FOR THE CONFERRING OF SACRED ORDERS?

1. In permitting these ordinations only at distant intervals during the year, she gives an addi-

tional solemnity to the ceremony and makes its significance more deeply felt. By this she insures also that no ordination can be given unknown to her or without the faithful being advised of it, and furthermore, that no ordinand can be promoted too quickly from one order to another.

2. In appointing for ordination certain days at the beginning of each of the four seasons and in Lent, (that is during those times she has set apart in a particular manner for prayer and penance), she seeks to impress upon the ordinandi, as upon the Apostles of old, the need they have of the prayers of all the faithful and how acceptable to Heaven in their behalf are offerings of fastings and divers other works of mortification, quite as in early Christian ages.¹

3. A pious liturgist of the thirteenth century attributes to the Church other and more mystical designs which though very edifying are without doubt less manifest or accredited. He says: "She ordains her ministers on Saturday, the day whereon the Lord rested from His work of creation, that thus her ministers may understand that in giving themselves

¹ ACTS, I, 14; XIII, 1; XIV, 22.

to God they are to renounce all servile work as well as profane occupation, and to devote themselves exclusively and with all their energy to the worship of God and the eternal well-being of the souls whom God shall commit to them. She ordains them at each of the four seasons of the year as if to teach them that always they must be at her service, ready to preach the gospel in the four quarters of the earth. More than this, each season seems to give the ordinandi a particular word of instruction. Spring exhorts to an increase of virtue in all ways; Summer bespeaks the need of a warm and ardent Charity, such as filled the breasts of the Apostles after Pentecost; Autumn reminds them of the harvest which for them is ever ripe, and awaits but their labors to yield up its fruit; Winter bids them die resignedly to self and to live henceforth in the spirit of the Master. And lastly, Passiontide ordination is a solemn word on the obligation of the disciple of the Savior to carry the cross after Him and make of himself an added immolation to the glory of the Father."¹

¹ HONORIUS AUGUSTOD., *De Gemma Animae*, III, 55. Cf. P. Surin, *Oeuvres*, *Letter xiv.*

III.

THE TITLE TO WHICH ONE MUST BE ORDAINED.

1. Of those who were not to make a vow of poverty in some religious order, the Church has long required that all candidates for Holy Orders possess some ecclesiastical benefice or patrimony sufficient to maintain them, or have the right to receive maintenance from a determined source: this is called a *title*; and to make sure that this condition is fulfilled she exacts that a legal proof thereof be remitted to the bishop. This discipline which is very ancient, was sanctioned by the Council of Trent. Its purpose is to prevent the multiplication of needy priests who will have no resources. That a priest be reduced to beggary is sad, and by all means to be prevented. Every priest has need of being independent and respected by the faithful, in order to exercise well his ministry; while the time spent in gaining a livelihood would be so much taken from the service of God and the care of souls. Nowadays the patrimonial title is no longer required generally. In some dioceses a minimum patrimony is fixed by statute, and all due attention must be given to the legal observance

thereof, and any promise contrary to the substance or purport of the statute or the title would be a grave fault, liable to suspension. If the candidate for orders had none of the titles mentioned, *nec paupertatis, nec beneficii, nec patrimonii*, the bishop could ordain him for his own diocese, taking upon himself the burden of furnishing the ordinand with means of suitable livelihood.

In this country, up to within a few years, clerics were ordained *ad titulum missionis* and were dependent upon their bishop for their living and had a legal claim thereto. Recently, in the year 1908, the title for the United States was changed to *ad servitium ecclesiae*. There was also a further legal transaction to be observed before admittance to orders, it is the taking and signing of the oath, whereby a man bound himself to work and to remain in the diocese for which he is ordained, unless released by the Congregation of the Propaganda. This too was done away with when the United States ceased to be a mission country, *i.e.*, subject to the aforesaid congregation. Now, as said above, the title of ordination is *ad servitium ecclesiae* and no vow or promise is exacted except of those who have been trained

for the diocese at the expense of the bishop or diocese; such must sign a promise to this effect: *Ego, fideliter promitto me exinde in perpetuum mancipaturum Dioecesi* (Promissio ab eis qui ad Sacros Ordines promoventur pro Dioecesi originis, quique gratuito in bonum Dioecesis aluntur. Ex Decreto S. C. C. Postquam vi Constit., 29 Julii, 1909.)

Over and above all this, the Council of Trent requires documentary assurance of the legitimate birth, age, and reliable testimony of the morals and life of the candidate. The Council wished this accomplished by the publishing of banns in the native and domiciliary parish of the ordinand; however both the fact of proclamations and the number of them has been left to the discretion of the diocesan authorities.

IV.

WHAT IS THE SUBDIACONATE AND WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF A SUBDEACON?

1. The subdiaconate is an Order which gives the privilege of ascending to the altar after the priest and deacon to take part with them in the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice.

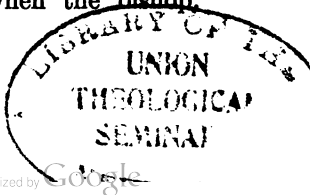
2. According to the Pontifical, liturgical writers, and the practice of the Church, the functions of the subdeacon are:

First, to prepare the material to be consecrated; secondly, to bring the sacred vessels to the altar, thirdly, to chant solemnly the Epistle of the Mass; fourthly, to pour into the chalice the water that must be mixed with wine for the Offertory; fifthly, to serve the deacon at the altar and to be thereby a second witness of, and a second coöperator in the Divine Sacrifice; sixthly, to receive the offerings of the faithful; seventhly, to see to the good condition, neatness, and cleanliness of the sacred vessels, purificators, and corporals; eighthly, to bear the Cross in processions; and lastly, to teach catechism or give familiar instruction to grown people, though without ascending the pulpit.

V.

AT WHAT MOMENT AND IN WHAT MANNER IS THE ORDINATION TO THE SUBDIACONATE EFFECTED?

The privileges and graces of the subdiaconate are conferred at the moment when the bishop



making the ordinand touch the chalice and paten says: "*Videte cujus ministerium vobis traditur: ideo vos admoneo ut ita vos exhibeatis ut Deo placere possitis.*" Hence it is the touching of the sacred vessels that is the matter of the Order while the words of the prelate are the form thereof.

Some theologians see a second matter and form in the touching of the book of Epistles and the words of the pontiff which reveal the meaning of the rite: "*Accipite librum Epistolarum, et habete potestatem legendi eas in Ecclesia Sancti Dei, tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.*"

Those who do not regard the Subdiaconate as a sacrament attach but little importance to these rites. They have, as they say, no divine virtue since they have not always been in use in the Church and are even of quite recent usage in one part of the Church.¹ To these it is sufficient to answer that for the production of grace and the constitution of a

¹ It appears, however, that the subdiaconate is of very remote antiquity. Pope Cornelius (251) counts seven subdeacons in his catalogue of clerics of the Roman Church, and St. Cyprian (258) makes mention of this Order more than ten times in his Epistles.

sacrament it is not necessary that this or that precise matter and form have been in use from the beginning, much less have been designated in the institution of the Sacrament of Orders. Could not Our Lord have been content with establishing for the consecration of His ministers an especial Sacrament having such an effect and producing suitable grace, and have left to the Church the power of determining the matter and form or the acts necessary on the part of the ministers and subjects for conferring the grace and the dignity?

Besides it is certain that the usage of saying to a deacon, priest, and bishop at ordination, "*Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*," is not so very ancient. Yet who will presume to doubt or question the efficacy of these words, since the canon of Trent says: "*Si quis dixerit per sacram ordinationem non dari Spiritum Sanctum ac proinde frustra episcopum dicere: Accipe Spiritum Sanctum, anathema sit?*"¹ Wherefore if the Church can and did provide an element of the Sacrament of Orders, if she can validly establish and introduce this particular form, the conclusion is, perforce, that she can equally as well provide and

¹ CONC. TRID., Sess. XXIII, *De reform.*, 4.

introduce the matter of a sacrament. The argument is even "*a majori*:" she has used this power in regard to the Diaconate; why may she not exercise it in regard to an inferior Order?

VI.

WHY DO THE ORDINANDI FOR THE SUBDIACONATE PROSTRATE THEMSELVES BEFORE THE ALTAR TOGETHER WITH THE DEACONS AND PRIESTS-TO-BE, WHILE THE BISHOP AND CLERGY CHANT THE LITANY OF THE SAINTS?

1. The intention of the Clergy, in chanting the Litany, is to obtain of Heaven for the ordinandi the graces necessary for a worthy reception of Sacred Orders and a becoming exercise of their holy functions: "*Ut hos electos benedicere, sanctificare, et consecrare digneris*," the bishop will pray at the end. During this solemn and earnest supplication one seems to behold the Church triumphant in Heaven turning with sympathetic gaze and succoring hand to the Church in labor on earth. Could anything be better calculated to impress the ordinandi with a right understanding of the importance

which attaches to such a reception of the Order as will insure its full effect and the production of its fruits.

2. The prostration of the ordinandi is a striking expression of the sentiments of humility and devotion with which they should consecrate themselves to Our Lord. When God manifested Himself to Abraham and declared that he was to be the father of the chosen people, the great patriarch humbly fell upon his face to the earth in acknowledgment of his nothingness and in protestation of his unworthiness. So at the moment when about to contract with God an indissoluble alliance and receive from Him a gauge of the dignity to which he is destined, the future priest seeks, as it were, to annihilate himself at the feet of the Lord in sincere confession of his utter impotence to respond to His designs. To this adoration and humility the ordinand joins self-immolation and a promise of unreserved devotion. Alive to the necessity of becoming a new man, since he must live in the angelic virtue for the days he has yet to spend on earth, he begs of Our Lord the grace to die to self, to break the yoke of flesh and sin, to bury without hope of resurrection every-

thing that might still remain in him of the corruption of the old man. For this it is that the body of flesh lies stretched and lifeless, as it were, upon the pavement, while the new creation of grace, the spiritual sacerdotal man makes offering to God of service, in purity and fervor of soul, unto death.¹

VII.

THE SYMBOLISM OF THE ORDINATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE SUBDEACON.

1. The ceremonies of the ordination of a subdeacon are very suggestive of the powers and graces conferred therein. Of this we shall treat more at length when speaking of the insignia and conferring of the Order.

2. The functions of the office are equally significant. The chief of which, pertaining to the Divine Sacrifice, consists in the preparation of the materials for consecration, the mixing of water with wine in

¹ Adhaesit pavimento anima mea: vivifica me secundum verbum tuum. Ps. cxviii; Auferes spiritum eorum et deficient, et in pulverem suum revertentur. Emitte spiritum tuum et creabuntur; et renovabis faciem terrae. Ps. ciii, 29.

the chalice, and the holding of veiled paten before the eyes even through the second elevation. These three acts are suggestive to the Subdeacon of three things: First, a reminder; of the Savior all through His life holding himself in readiness to sacrifice, on the altar prepared by the Father, His body and blood; secondly, a worthy purpose; of offering and immolating himself in the holy sacrifice together with Jesus Christ, our divine head; thirdly, a hope; that it will one day be granted him to see the Divine Victim beyond the veil and know Him in His glory.¹

The Subdeacon cannot better occupy himself during the holy mysteries than with these thoughts so thoroughly in keeping with the spirit of his office and unfailingly prolific of heartfelt aspirations.

¹ (1) *Ingressus mundum dicit: Hostiam et oblationem nolui, corpus autem aptasti mihi. Tunc dixi: Ecce venio ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam. HEBR., x, 5-7.* (2) *Sacerdotium sanctum offerre hostias spirituales Deo per Jesum Christum. I PET., II, 5. Qui Passionis dominicae mysteria celebramus, debemus imitari quod agimus. Tunc enim pro nobis hostia erit, cum nosmetipsos Deo Patri hostiam fecerimus. S. GREG., M. Dial. IV. (3) Videbimus, amabimus, laudabimus. S. AUG., De civ. Dei, Cap. ult.*

VIII.

IN CONFIDING TO THE SUBDEACON THE CARE OF THE SACRED LINENS DOES THE BISHOP ATTACH TO THEM ANY MYSTICAL SIGNIFICANCE?

Yes, and the more thoroughly to impress this significance upon the Subdeacons he even insists upon it, as he had done in conferring Minor Orders, while declaring to them their functions and duties. His point is this, that if they exercise great care, as they ought, that the Body of the Savior be always surrounded with whatever is becoming and neat, they should be not a whit less attentive to the purity of their own souls and should regard it as their foremost obligation to bestow all pains in order to keep pure from sin and to keep their souls, like the linens, without soil or blemish. "For," he says, "the true altar of the divine majesty is the Man-God, or rather the Person of the Word elevating His human nature to infinite dignity and with it making acceptable to His Father all that belongs to Himself and what or whomsoever He has been pleased to unite with Himself in His Sacrifice."¹ But what is

¹ Altare quidem Ecclesiae est Christus, cujus altaris pallae et corporalia sunt membra Christi, seu fideles Dei. PONTIF., *de Subd.*)

there more intimately in union with His humanity, or what that He could be more pleased to offer to His Father than the pure and earnest souls who partake of His life and are of His Spirit. For, wherein is the glory and joy of the Savior if not, in part at least, in being surrounded with such and in seeing the fairest of His own virtues showing forth in them. They are, as it were, His fair mantle or comely vesture; whence follows the duty of His ministers, to suffer nothing on the body of the Savior or in His members that befits not with the holiness thereof. Bring these thoughts to mind when giving care to the neatness of the linens or the decoration of the altar.¹

IX.

WHAT SIGNIFICANCE ATTACHES TO THE VARIOUS PARTS
OF THE INSIGNIA WITH WHICH THE SUBDEACON
IS VESTED AT THE ALTAR?

1. The Amice, a linen cloth which covers the head and neck of the sacred minister, serves as a

¹ Beatus Joannes vidit Filium hominis praeinctum zona aurea, id est sanctorum caterva. Pontif.—Spiritus est Deus, et eos qui adorant eum in spiritu et veritate oportet adorare. JOAN., IV, 24.

protection to the voice. Many writers holding this view, see in the amice a memorial of the veil with which the Savior was blindfolded in the pretorium,¹ or of the napkin that was wrapped about His head while in the sepulchre.² They would make of it a reminder, to the person receiving it, of the obligation never more to be ruled by merely natural sentiments, least of all by pride which finds expression of its aspirations in the head and through it: they counsel humble and earnest petition of God for a generous share in the graces merited by His Son's death and burial. Furthermore by way of supplement to the words of the bishop in giving this vestment, "*Accipe amictum, per quem designatur castigatio vocis*" they add: "If you are to care for your voice and protect it against the eager air it follows by greater urgency that you have regard to the words you utter that they may be without reproach and altogether such as befit one in Sacred Orders." Advice that cannot safely be disregarded; for the faults against which it is directed, slander, raillery,

¹ *Coeperunt velare caput ejus et colaphis eum caedere.* MATT., XXV, 65.

² *Petrus vidit linteamina posita et sudarium quod fuerat super caput ejus.* JOHN., XX, 6.

contentiousness, indiscretion, or impropriety are avoided in conversation only by circumspection.

*"Si quis in verbo non offendit, hic perfectus est vir."*¹

Other writers, impressed by the words of the prayer, said while putting on the amice, *"Impone, Domine capite meo, galeam salutis,"* etc., make it to symbolize the helmet of salvation, the gift of a lively faith, which of all things is the most necessary defence against the devil.²

2. The Alb—*"Alba"*—is by its whiteness mystically significant of the innocence required of him who performs sacred functions.³ The Cincture which holds up the alb or keeps it in its folds around the body bespeaks the strength and resolution with which the wearer ought to restrain the flesh against depravity and hold it in subjection.⁴ This is the

¹ JAC., III, 2.

² In omnibus sumentes scutum fidei, in quo possitis omnia tela nequissimi ignea extinguere; et galeam salutis assumite. EPH., VI, 17.

³ Albis induti insistunt ut coelestem vitam habeant candidique ad hostias accedant, mundi scilicet corpore et incorrupti corde. S. ISID., *De Eccl. off.*, II, 8.

⁴ Alba cingulo stringitur ut omnis voluptas carnalis astricta intelligatur, dicenti Domino: Sint lumbi vestri praeincti. DURAND., *De off. divin.*, III, 3. Lumbos enim praeingimus cum carnis luxuriam per continentiam coarctamus. S. GREG., M., *Hom.*, XIII, in *Evang.*

idea embodied in the prayer to be recited while girding oneself.¹ The surplice, though of the same color as the alb, is but half its length, and covers but half the body; while the alb clothes the wearer entirely. The meaning of this is that whatever of carnal mindedness or human failing remained after Tonsure, has now disappeared and the virtue of the Sacred minister should at last have attained its perfectness.² It may further be noted that the Tonsured receives his Surplice from the bishop at ordination, while the Subdeacon dons the alb before being ordained. This gives us to understand that the Sacred Orders demand a virtue already acquired, though for Tonsure it suffices merely to have a sincere purpose to work for its acquisition.³

3. The maniple was originally, perhaps, a simple cloth or towel used for wiping the face and was

¹ Praecinge me, Domine, cingulo puritatis, et extingue in lumbis meis humorem libidinis, ut maneat in me virtus continentiae et castitatis. Cf. *Ex.*, XII, 11.

² Dealba me, Domine, et munda cor meum, ut in sanguine Agni dealbatus, gaudiis perfruar sempiternis. Ut tota pristinatorum peccatorum turpitudine celetur. RUPERT, *De div. off.*, 29.

³ Nemo ad Sacrum ordinem accedere permittatur, nisi aut virgo aut probatae sit castitatis. *Dist.* XXXII, Cap. Nemo.

carried on the left arm during ceremonies. This from its seeming etymology, "*Manus mappula*." From the expression as used by Hildebert, we infer that it is a distinctive badge of the members of the Lord's household. But the word "*maniple*" itself and the custom of carrying it on the arm seem rather to be expressive of the sheafs of goodly works that each of these elect is expected to present to the Lord of the harvest when the crops are gathered in. Allusion to this significance is made by the bishop in his words to the Subdeacon: "*Accipe manipulum per quem designatur fructus bonorum operum*," as if he were to say: "Your time for laboring at the harvest is now arrived. Till this moment you scarce have taken thought but for yourself; yet now the hour is in which you are to have concern for your brethren and to labor for their sanctification. For know well that you are called to labor, not repose." The Church seeks to bring this lesson home by having us repeat the prayer: "*Merear, Domine, portare manipulum fletus et doloris, ut cum exultatione recipiam mercedem laboris*." If one would reap he must first plough, sow, and till. Labor may not be dispensed with, and to sustain and cheer us

in our toil we have only to remember that we are in the service of the Savior, for Whom no labor is ever vain, Who rewards each according to his effort.¹ The maniple then, with its injunction to austerity is still to be taken with joy and its cross to be kissed with love.

4. The Tunic given to the Subdeacon is a festive garment: "*Tunica jucunditatis et indumento justitiæ induat te Dominus*," is the prayer of the bishop. As if to say: "May God give you a generous share in the consolations He is wont to heap upon those who proffer Him loving service." Or in other words: "May His reign be firmly established in your soul, for its fruit is joy of heart and the peace of His Holy Spirit."

Though originally and for some time the subdeacon had no distinctive vestment, his "*tunica alba*" was gradually made more and more ornamental and altered in length until in the twelfth century it was given as a distinctive garment, a "*Tunicella*," to be worn over another plain and longer tunic.

¹ Apostolus non dixit: Plus omnibus profui; sed: Plus omnibus laboravi. Deus enim mercedem laborum sanctorum, non ex proventu laboris, sed ex labore metitur. PET. BLES., *Serm.*

In course of time it has become very like to the deacon's dalmatic and today is hardly to be distinguished from it.

ARTICLE II.

THE OBLIGATION OF CHASTITY ATTACHED TO
SUBDEACONSHIP.

X.

IS THIS OBLIGATION OF LONG STANDING?

The Fathers of the second council of Carthage (390) trace this obligation, for all sacred ministers, back even to the Apostles. They allege the teaching and practice of the very earliest Christian times in favor of this discipline.¹ For, they say, by observing this obligation we shall conform to the teachings of the Apostles and to the most ancient practice of the Church."²

¹ Placuit sacros Antistites et Dei sacerdotes, necnon et Levitas vel qui sacramentis divinis inserviunt, continentibus esse in omnibus, ut quod Apostoli docuerunt et ipsa servavit antiquitas, nos quoque custodiamus. CONC., CARTHAG., II. Cf. S. PET., D., *Cont. cler. incont.*

² Christus virgo, virgo Maria, utriusque sexus dedicavere principia. Apostoli vel virgines vel post nuptias continentibus. S. HIERON., *Contr. Jovin.*

Nevertheless, there was for a considerable time some difference of opinion and hesitation about extending this law of continence to Subdeacons; just as theologians were not unanimous in counting the Subdiaconate among the Sacred Orders. St. Leo sought to establish this discipline,¹ and St. Gregory the Great settled it definitely by forbidding the ordination of any to the Subdiaconate who would not promise to abide by this law.² From his time the practice became uniform and constant in the Latin Church. Proof of this is found in the Roman Pontifical which certainly is of more recent date. Therein the bishop frankly declares to the candidates for the Subdiaconate that they must once and for all renounce the secular life and the right to marry. Other testimonies are to be had in the Councils and Fathers who, in this respect, make no distinction between the major orders. "The Fathers have always insisted," says St. Isidor of Seville (seventh century) in speaking of the Subdeacons, "that they who approach so closely to the holy mysteries ought themselves to be holy, to live in celibacy and to preserve themselves from stain of carnal lust."³

¹ *Epist ad Anastas.*, cap. Omnium, 1: dist. 33.

² S. GREG., M., *Epist.* XLIV, lib., Ind. IX.

³ *De divinis officiis.*

And today among us it can be said that the law of celibacy affects every member of the clergy, not that the merely Tonsured, or those only in minor orders may not reënter the secular state, but in the sense that the clerical and married states are held to be incompatible, and, in consequence, he who will not be a celibate foregoes thereby the ecclesiastical profession and its privileges and prerogatives.

XI.

DO THESE SACRED MINISTERS OBLIGE THEMSELVES MERELY TO A LIFE OF CELIBACY, OR ARE THEY HELD TO THE PRACTISE OF CHASTITY EVEN AS THOSE WHO HAVE THE RELIGIOUS VOW?

The effect of the ordination to the Subdiaconate is not merely to forbid the marrying of sacred ministers or to place a perpetual impediment thereto; it constrains them rather to the observance of absolute chastity throughout life, so that any sin committed by them against this virtue takes on a twofold malice and is a sacrilege.¹

¹ Praecinge me Domine cingulo puritatis, ut maneat in me virtus continentiae et castitatis. *Missal.* Major est castitas quam virginitas. Si non vis mori, aut castitatem

Whether this obligation rest on the vow of chastity implied in the voluntary reception of the Subdiaconate, or be directly imposed upon the Subdiacon by ecclesiastical law, is of little consequence. It is for the honor of God and out of regard for the holy mysteries that he is bound to be chaste. To fulfil the functions of Angels, one has need of the purity of Angels. The sacred minister cannot fail in this except to the detriment of religion, thereby rendering himself guilty, in some degree, of sacrilege.

Some theologians, following the opinion that the Subdiacon does not make or take a vow properly so-called and that the Church does not extend her legislative power to internal acts, have thought that the character of sacrilege should not be attributed to the purely mental sins of thought or complacency. But this opinion is without authority. The general and received teaching is that in accepting the subdiaconate the minister of the Church is bound to make, and equivalently does make, in an implicit manner, a vow of chastity, and that in *vir-custodias aut ad altare non accedas. Virginitas in uno membro, castitas in omnibus membris. Sicut igitur lingua dicetur casta et cor, ita oculi, aures, manus, pedes et caetera membra dicuntur.* S. BRUNO, *De Cast.*, 9.

tue of this vow he is consecrated to God, soul as well as body; moreover, if from that moment he should once give up his mind to impure thoughts or carnal desires he fails in the obligation of his state and profanes, in himself, an holy thing.¹ The consequence of this is, it seems, that to confess entirely a sin of this kind, a sacred minister ought to declare his rank and condition in the Church, just as though a religious.

XII.

THE REASONS FOR THE LAW OF CELIBACY AND THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY BINDING UPON ALL SACRED MINISTERS.

The law is of the extremest gravity; having for its fundamental purpose the glory of God, the honor of the holy altar, and the interests of souls.

1. What God expects of His ministers is not an external service or appearance merely, but a worship, interior, spiritual, and sincere. He is a Spirit and wishes to be honored in spirit and in truth.²

¹ Cf. Cap. I, *De Voto*, in Sexto; Extrav. JOAN., XXII, Cap. 1, et BENED., XIV, Inter praeteritos, § I (December, 1747).

² Spiritus est Deus, et eos qui adorant eum in spiritu et veritate oportet adorare. Nam et Pater tales quaerit qui adorent eum. JOAN., IV, 24, 25.

He will have it that His ministers belong to Him unreservedly, that they love Him with all their heart, that they serve Him with all their soul and with all their strength. But, to serve and love God thus, the heart may not be divided, nor retain any unworthy or unbecoming attachment; at the disposition of the Sovereign Master all must be placed; life as well as strength. It is desirable and even necessary then that the minister be without other alliance or human engagement. "*Qui cum uxore est, sollicitus est quae sunt mundi,*" says the Apostle, "*et divisus est. Qui sine uxore est, sollicitus est quae Domini sunt, quomodo placeat Deo.*"¹ For all the more reason should he be a stranger to carnal affections and the vice of impurity. Nothing is more opposed to the love of God than impurity; nothing degrades, blinds, and dulls the soul so sadly as the gratified lusts of the flesh.² Wherefore even

¹ I COR., VII, 32-33. Amo Deum; nullum praeter eum amatorem admittam. S. AGNES. *Brev.*, January 21.

² Usus venereorum retrahit animam a perfecta intentione tendendi ad Deum. Et hoc quod S. Augustinus dicit in libro I, *Soliloquiorum*, Cap. x: Nihil esse sentio, quod magis ex arce dejiciat animum virilem quam blandimenta feminea, corporumque contactus. Alio etiam modo, propter sollicitudinem quam ingerit, homini gubernatione uxoris et

under the Old Law, and in the figurative worship, the priests were obliged to live continently all during the time in which they were in service at the temple.¹

2. The Eucharistic Victim, Whom the sacred ministers adore at the altar is the Man-God, the Word made Flesh. But the Word made Flesh, the Man-God is Holiness Itself and Purity by essence. He has truly a horror of the least sin. He will not suffer any defilement in or near Him: "*Discedite a me omnes qui operamini iniquitatem.*"² And what is more hateful to Him than all else, and revolting in the extreme to His holiness, is impurity or whatever savors of it. He can scarce bear to see around Him any one or anything that bears traces of this vice or suggests the idea of it. Is any limit, then, to be placed to the innocence and purity of His sacred ministers who are permitted to approach so near to the holy altar, who consecrate Him, who offer Him to the Eternal Majesty of the Father, who distribute

filiorum et rerum temporalium quae ad eorum sustentationem sufficiant, 2^a 2^{ae}, qu. 186, a. 4.—Vitia carnalia in tautum extinguunt iudicium rationis, in quantum longe abducunt a ratione. 2^a 2^{ae}, qu. 53, q. 6. ad 3.

¹ LEVIT., XXI, 6. Cf. I COR., VII, 5. Incorruptio facit esse proximum Deo. *Sap.*, VI, 20.

² Is., VI, 9.

Him to the faithful.¹ What more could He be made to suffer than to see these chosen and consecrated ones neath the degrading yoke of nature's lusts or soiled with impurity?

If, says a holy Doctor, during His life, He gathered round His person none but virgins or men of exemplary purity; if He provided that at His death as at His birth none but pure and innocent hands should touch His sacred body, can it be that now, when gloriously risen and in Heaven, He is indifferent as to resting between impure hands or finds any pleasure in descending into hearts He knows to be given up to indulgence of the flesh? The faithful, according to the Apostle, who receive Him into their hearts and thereby become temples of the Incarnate God, are under rigorous obligation to lead a chaste life. But the sacred minister is the very tabernacle, the Holy of holies; he is, in a sense, one person with Him, for before God and man, he is a Christ.²

¹ O quam munda debent esse manus illae! Sacerdotibus specialiter dictum est: Sancti estote, quoniam ego sanctus sum. IMIT., IV, 11.

² Si Redemptor noster tantopere diligit floridi pudoris integritatem, ut non modo de virgineo utero nasceretur, sed etiam a nutritio virgine tractaretur, et hoc cum adhuc parvulus vagiret in cibum in cunis, a quibus nunc obsecro

3. The faithful see in the sacred minister and the priest especially, another Jesus Christ. From him they learn the way to heaven, and he must teach them by example as well as by word; he must intercede for them before God, he must aid them in their sanctification, administer to them the sacraments, obtain grace and other means necessary for their salvation, even at the cost of his own life. But do you not see that to be able to live up to these duties and accomplish such eternal good the priest must be, as his Master, a spiritual man, his eye fixed on eternity, unattracted by carnal pleasures, unattached to creatures, looking only to the interests of God and the welfare of souls? Do you not feel how pure you must be in order to purify others, how unswerving and steadfast you must be that you may be able to ground in solid virtue weak and wavering souls, what absolute tyranny you must have over yourself to keep your senses in constant and ready control, never to give occasion for censure or even suspicion, to do honor to your ministry and see it fruitful even in the midst of corruption and despite many dangers?

tractari vult corpus suum, cum jam immensus regnat in coelis? S. PET. DAM., *De Coelib.*, C. III. Cf. I COR., VI, 15, 19, 20.

You are of those who know what the world thinks of the priest who falls from the virtue of his calling. You have seen the scandal that comes upon and is suffered by the Church through a cleric's unfaithfulness to his solemn profession; and you have felt indignation or some kindred feeling stir your soul on beholding some such faithless disciple wearing the insignia of a sanctity which he lacks utterly, or on hearing such a one preach truths that condemn him as he speaks.

These considerations are sufficient to show the wisdom of the laws imposed upon sacred ministers by Holy Church, and to make one appreciate the responsibility they incur who make to God a solemn promise of perpetual chastity.

XIII.

THAT THE SUBDIACONATE MAY BE RECEIVED WITHOUT FEAR OF RASHNESS WILL IT SUFFICE EVEN TO BE FULLY RESOLVED TO LIVE UP TO THE VOW OF CHASTITY AND NEVER TO EXPOSE ONESELF IMPRUDENTLY?

Even such a resolution is not sufficient. The Council of Trent expressly exacts that the candidate

be a man of solid and tried virtue. "Subjects," it says, are not to be admitted indiscriminately; but only those whose conduct guarantees their maturity; "*quorum probata vita senectus sit*;" and who have good ground for to hope that they will ever be found faithful to their engagement. "*Qui sperent, Deo auctore, se continere posse*."¹ Otherwise ordination would be one's undoing: a scandal to others and damnation to one's self.

And it may be of some value to realize that not ecclesiastical law alone, but natural and divine law forbid anyone to accept Holy Orders and their engagements unless he have well grounded hope of being able to live up to them. The glory of God and the interests of the Church are seriously involved in the candidates' regard for this rule, and it is clear that, should the case arise, the duty of the confessor is simply to see that it is observed strictly. If a confessor knew his penitent to be the subject of bad habits and, despite good desires, not likely to

¹ TRENT, Sess. XXIII, *De reform.*, 12, 13. Let these also first be proved: and so let them minister, having no crime. I TIM., 3. Not a neophyte. *Ibid.* It is one thing readily to obtain pardon of one's sins, but quite another hastily to be invested with insignia of sanctity. ST. BERN., *Epist.* VIII.

rid himself of them, he could absolve him from his sins, but he should not permit him to make a vow of chastity—nor even a simple and secret vow. It would better rather that the penitent be dispensed, should he have so inconsiderately made one. For all the more reason would it be wrong to let such an one make a solemn and irrevocable vow thus engaging himself in a holy profession, wherein, if lacking courage or strength, he would be exposed to all manner of profanation and to the giving of grave scandal; in all of which he would be most blameworthy.

If one then ask how an ordinand may be morally sure of keeping chaste, faithful to his vow, there seems but one answer whereby one may form his conscience on the matter; it is simply this: To make known to a wise and disinterested director all that he may have need to know of your past doings, all your present dispositions whatsoever touching the question to be settled; having done this with all candor and sincerity, abide by his decision. Such is the one rule given by masters, and the only one followed by worthy ecclesiastics.

As for the director, he will consult the principles

of moral theology, such authors as treat of clerical life, and his own experience, and will examine not only the behavior, past and present, of the penitent, but also the work done by grace in his soul, and, as well, the character, the faith, the sincerity of the individual and his regard for the holy mysteries. He ought, too, take into account the environment in which the ordinand has lived, and of that wherein he is to live, and the sort of ministry to which he may be assigned.

Without going further into the details of this matter, we think it well to add the words of two great doctors, whose wisdom and virtue vouch for the worth of their advice: St. Gregory the Great thus warns directors of ordinandi: "Examine well as to whether the subjects proposed have lived chaste for years." *An eorum vita in annis plurimis continens fuerit.*"¹

¹ Lest ever an ordinand perish, it should be known beforehand of what sort the subjects are, whether they have lived chaste during many years together, and if they are given to study and almsgiving. And since St. Paul forbade that a neophyte be admitted to Holy Orders, we are to consider as neophytes they who are as yet young in their conversion from sin. ST. GREG. GREAT, *Letter XXVI.*

"Would to God," exclaims St. Bernard, "that those who pretend to that perfection, would consider if they have the strength to attain thereto. Would to God, too, that those who cannot answer for themselves would not engage themselves in a life which is not within their strength: for all are not made for a state so holy, and not everyone may aspire to it. Better live married than burn as a celibate. Better save one's soul in the humbler rank of a layman, than be lost and damned in the ranks of the clergy—be they ever so exalted or honorable."

XIV.

THE SUBDEACON, BY REASON OF HIS VOW, OUGHT BE
MUCH GIVEN TO PRAYER.

This is but a consequence of the engagement he has made as a sacred minister. "*Quis potest facere mundum de immundo conceptum semine?*" said Job to the Lord. "*Nonne tu qui solus es.*" It is not natural to man to live the life of an angel, and it is not easy to persevere in a life so perfect. For if concupiscence has not destroyed our liberty altogether, it certainly has lessened it, and so hampered the

exercise thereof that one feels it an effort to persevere in well doing. So much so, that if left to ourselves, he cannot but lapse into sin before long. "*Sensus enim et cogitatio cordis humani ad malum prona sunt ab adolescentia,*" says the Lord Himself. To make good his promise and to lead a pure life the subdeacon has then need of a great grace, or rather, of a very special series of graces quite to the end of his life. This need is a real one, a want, and the best of good will cannot supply it.

But the subdeacon must be assured against ever falling from grace somehow. By what means then shall he obtain the much needed help? By no other means than by prayer—unceasing—continual prayer. Prayer in season and out of season. *Ut sciri quoniam non possum esse continens nisi Deus det, adii Dominum et deprecatus sum,*" says the sage. The Christian knows that prayer only can relieve his helplessness. True enough, God, in giving a vocation thereby engages Himself to give all graces that it may be well lived up to, since faith teaches that He can ask the impossible of no one. And yet withal, it is no less His will that those needing His assistance should have recourse to His goodness and

ask His grace.¹ It is to all His disciples, whether in orders or not, that Christ says "*Ask and you shall receive.*" And you—if you pray as you should, will surely obtain all that is necessary, and anything of which you feel the want. "*Everyone whosever asketh, receiveth.*" But if you do not pray, you are not likely to receive, and sure it is, at least, that you will have no guarantee of receiving the help you will sorely need; that help which God has sincerely pledged Himself to accord you. So, too, if you give up praying you are like to see dry up (for you at least) the source or fount of grace, howsoever bounteous it may have been for you at first.

¹ Caritas Dei, accende me. Continentiam jubes: da quod jubes, et jube quod vis. S. AUG., *Conf.* xx, 29. God requires no impossibilities; but in requiring He gives us to understand that we are to do what we can and pray for that which is beyond us. S. AUG., *De bono persever.* II. We believe indeed that no one comes to salvation unless invited thereto by God; that no one even though invited works out his salvation unless aided by God, and that none merit His aid except the prayerful. S. AUG., *De Eccl. dogm.*

XV.

IS THIS THE REASON WHY THE CHURCH IMPOSES THE OBLIGATION OF THE BREVIARY ON THE SUBDEACON?

Not the principal reason. The church in imposing on those in Holy Orders the recitation of the Office purposes above all to offer through them to God the tribute of prayer and praise He requires of her, and to get in return the abundance of graces in favor of her children which she desires. What brings her to charge all who receive the subdiaconate with this duty, is that, in consecrating themselves to God in ordination, and in engaging themselves to live a life in a sense truly angelic, they make themselves worthy of the rôle of an angel and of serving their brethren as pleaders before the throne of Grace.

But these are not the only reasons, for it would seem that the Church, taking into consideration the needs as well as the merits of the young subdeacons, seeks to fortify them in their weakness while honoring them in their virtue. In fact the office is for them a powerful aid. Over and above the fruits of their prayer which are theirs by first right, untold

valuable graces cannot but be gained them by reason of the application the office requires. A subdeacon, obliged to converse with God during the principal hours of the day, can and ought to be ever in the presence of God, always under the impression of the truths of religion, imbued with sentiments of faith and be a man of desires and petitions. His life then can easily be, cannot easily be other (if properly lived) than a continual prayer and a series—an uninterrupted flow of graces.

XVI.

DOES IT MATTER MUCH THAT THE BREVIARY BE
RECITED WELL AND SHOULD ONE APPLY HIMSELF
THERE TO WITH CARE?

To begin with: the breviary ought not be a source of scruples or anxiety. Such dispositions do harm to the soul, and come always from a wrong notion of God and of the obligation He imposes. Yet one should have a true esteem for his charge and an honest desire to acquit himself of it well. One cannot have too much regard or love for the breviary. The ends which the Church has in view in giving us

the office to say, are too holy, the time it requires is too considerable, and the fruits that can be derived therefrom are too precious for it to be said without application or fervor¹ or for such a proceeding not to be disorderly.

Here, it would seem, is what a young subdeacon should do, who would fulfil his duty well and derive profit therefrom.

1. He should ask of God a right notion of this public prayer of which he is constituted the minister. Let him conceive a high esteem of the breviary and of the elements of which it is composed: Holy Scripture, the writings of the Fathers, the lives of the Saints, hymns, responses, collects; nothing therein that is not eminently proper whereby to honor the Divine Majesty and sanctify one's soul—nothing which has not every title to our regard and affection. Unfortunately, these are not always one's actual sentiments. Ecclesiastics there are who see in the breviary nothing but an ordinary book of ordinary piety—and regard its recitation as an official act to be gotten through almost any way at all, saving integrity.

¹ *The divine Office considered from a devotional point of view, from the French of M. l'abbé Bacquez, London, 1885.*

2. He should never commence the office without first having stirred up faith and elicited a sincere desire to glorify God and to draw down His graces upon Holy Church. Thus he gives himself to the Holy Spirit of Our Lord when reciting the "*Aperi, Domine,*" and will recite the office becomingly—"*digne, attente et devote, ac reverenter.*" Otherwise, how can he enter into the sentiments of faith, of thanksgiving, repentance, admiration, petition, and love of which the Psalms and Canticles are the expression?¹

3. He should form the habit of arousing his attention, his piety and his spirit of union with Our Lord each time he says: "*Deus in adjutorium meum; Gloria Patri; Oremus; Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*"—or at any other word he may find particularly impressive or touching.

For the rest, he will do well to recall that in matters of law the purpose of a precept does not fall under the precept, and that in every function, as in every virtue, there is room for distinction between what is

¹ Cantantes et psallentes in cordibus vestris Deo. EPH., v. 19. Audiant hoc adolescentuli: audiant ii quibus psallendi in ecclesia est officium: Deo, non voce sed corde cantandum. *Dist.* 90, c. 1.

of counsel and what is of obligation. That which is rigorously required in order to satisfy the obligation of the breviary is easily accomplished; and this fact in itself constitutes a good reason for not being content with the mere fulfilment of that obligation, but for striving to follow as best one can the examples and recommendations of holy priests. He who would neglect this counsel and do but what is absolutely required of him has scarcely the spirit of the ministry he has undertaken, and is but little short of indifferent to the honor of God, and has a poor eye to his own interests.¹

XVII.

THE VOW OF CHASTITY MEANS HUMILITY.

So teach all spiritual writers. They, one and all, give as incontestable these two maxims: (a) One has need of great graces to lead a chaste life;

¹ St Ligouri says: "One does not conceive what acts of virtue one performs, what merits one acquires, what graces one obtains when one recites the Breviary with interior spirit, when one produces from the heart the very sentiments that one gives expression to, when one enters with his whole soul into the words that one pronounces. *De officio divino.*

(b) One may not count on these graces unless he be humble of heart. "*Ut castitas detur humilitas meretur, quia Deus humilibus dat gratiam.*"¹ And why does God reserve to the humble His most precious graces? Because such, having no mistaken notions of their nothingness, are phased by a sense of their wretchedness, know what it is to be in want of God's help, and are aware too of their unworthiness to claim help: because such, having had recourse to divine goodness never lack in thanks nor fail to give the honor thereof where the honor is due. It is then of course to His glory that God be prodigal of grace to the humble. It is quite otherwise with shallow, conceited souls who are pleased mainly with themselves. It does not occur to them that they are really lacking in anything—much less do they ever feel impressed by their nothingness. That which they receive they put to their own credit quite. Because no danger is apprehended or heeded by them they neither take precaution nor think to ask any aid. Worse still, they brave and court danger and unwisely expose themselves. Risk is

¹ S. BERNARD, *De off. Episc.* Custos virginitatis caritas, locus autem hujus custodis, humilitas. S. AUG., *De virgin.*, 51.

an unmeaning word to them. Small wonder then that God is in no hurry to forewarn or forearm them with His graces—or that to such souls he is niggard of His graces and aloof. For, to be bountiful of His favors to these would be but to confirm them in their presumptuous conceit. He would rather leave them to themselves that they may come to know their weakness. Often it is His pleasure to effect their confusion and humiliation by the gravity and ignominy of the failures He suffers to befall them; "*Occultam superbiam punit aperta luxuria.*"¹ He treats them as, according to Saint Paul, He treated the conceited sages of old: "*Evanuerunt in cogitationibus suis . . . propter quod tradidit illos Deus in desideria cordis, in immunditiam, in passionem ignominie.*"² Know, then, that God's graces are reserved "to" the humble: but they are reserved "from" the proud and conceited of heart.

The Subdeacon must be chaste, which is to say, he must also be humble. And for other reasons too he should have regard to humility. Without hu-

¹ Multis saepe seminarium luxuriae fuit superbia. S. GREG., M. in JOB, xxxv, 17.

² ROM., i, 21, 24, 26. *Mulieres apostatare faciunt.* ECCL., xix.

mility there can scarce abide any other true virtue: neither religion nor patience, modesty nor sincerity—nor charity itself: but only self seeking, human respect, ambition, envy, jealousy, cunning, and whatever ill becomes the Christian and is the contrary of what God and man look to find in those sacred to the ministry of souls.

XVIII.

WHAT OUGHT A SUBDEACON DO THAT HE MAY BECOME HUMBLE AND REMAIN SO?

1. Let him be keenly sensible of the need he has of the virtue of humility, of the folly and malice of pride, of the nothingness of man as a creature, of the untold number of his failings, and of the malice of his faults before God.¹ This sentiment, though it be not humility, yet disposes the heart to be humble—to humble itself, to accept humiliation, slights, obscurity—and to be willing to be forgotten, overlooked or even disparaged and despised: it inspires little by little a wholesome aversion to vanity, pre-

¹ “*Melius ego me novi quam ceteri, sed melius Deus quam ego,*” says St. Augustine. And St. Francis de Sales: “My conscience and my confessor know what is to be thought of me.”

tentiousness, ambition, and all the other dispositions or doings that humility reprove.

2. Let him profit by all occasions to exercise himself in the practice of that virtue. Such occasions are frequent enough in the ministry of the subdiaconship, and it would seem, too, that the Church has multiplied them of a purpose in her ceremonial. Each and every function of the subdeacon at the altar is significant of subordination and respect. Never may he seat himself or cover his head until the deacon does so. Whenever the deacon is on his feet the subdeacon must also be standing. He may never deal with the celebrant except through the deacon. It is, in reality, the deacon whom the subdeacon serves: carrying for him the book of Gospels, walking, or taking up his position generally behind him, farther removed from the altar or at the left and on the lowest level.¹

He shows the deacons on all occasions marks of respect, as an inferior to his superior. Thus St. Isidore says, he is in the Church what the Nathineans were among the people of old "*serving the*

¹ *Humiliatio est via ad humilitatem, sicut lectio ad scientiam.* S. BERNARD, *Ep.* 87.

Lord in humility."¹ Even the name of *subdeacon* is a token of his inferiority and a reminder that he is not to overreach it. God grant that he be ever of humble mind! And, please heaven may he be able to the end of his days sincerely to say, "*Elegi abjectus esse in domo Dei mei!*"

3. Let him not seek preferment, nor love to be noticed, esteemed or honored: rather let him have a wholesome distrust of distinctions and of the lime-light—for they may well be feared as the stones that go before a fall: "*Nec primos recubitus in coenis, nec primas cathedras in synagogis, nec salutationes in foro, nec vocari ab hominibus Rabbi.*"²

4. Let him never be heard sounding his own praise or telling his own merit, or giving himself preference over his fellows. Rather than disparage them in any manner soever, or gainsay their talent or worth or belittle their virtue, he should readily and generously seek to gain them appreciation for their qualities and to render due honor to their merit.

¹ Subdiaconi in Esdra appellantur Nathinaei, id est in humilitate servientes.

² Caveant qui primas cathedras amant, ne contingat carere secundis, et qui primos recubitus eligunt incipiant cum rubore locum tenere novissimum! S. BERN., *Spur.* Vae nobis miseris ad quos Pharisaeorum vitia transierunt. S. JEROME, in MATT., XXXIII, 6.

XIX.

AFTER THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER AND HUMILITY WHAT MAY BEST BE RECOMMENDED TO THE SUBDEACON WHO WOULD BE FAITHFUL TO HIS VOW AND LEAD A PURE LIFE?

Three things not only may, but must be recommended: a love of work, mortification, and unworldliness.

1. An ecclesiastic who is given to idling and who habitually loses his time through profane occupation, in reading for pastime, in frivolous doings, in needless visiting, will yet become profane and no less frivolous in his thoughts and notions, and then his insipid, vapid and otherwise worldly mind will shortly be subjected to all manner of temptation: "*Multam malitiam docuit otiositas.*" An idle mind is ever open to the suggestions of the devil. For the one devil attacking the busy soul there are a hundred busying themselves with the idler. Should then a subdeacon wish not to expose his virtue, but seriously to hold to his promises to God, and to the Church, he has no alternative but to apply himself to work, and say with the Master Laborer,

"Pater meus usquemodo operatur, et ego operor." Every serious occupation furnishes the mind with serious and wholesome thoughts. Application to study and to duty put the life of the cleric on a plane higher than that of the senses and withdraw him from things merely of the flesh. Saint Jerome urges the study of Holy Writ. *"Learn to love the divine word and you will never fall through love of sensual pleasure."* In truth, the Word of God unites the soul to God. It teaches one to desire the things of heaven and inspires pure and holy affections.

2. A pure life means triumph of spirit over flesh; it presupposes, therefore, the practice of mortification. Whatever weakens the empire of the senses, restrains, or represses them, the same, in so far, protects and strengthens chastity. But, of all the senses two especially need be mortified; namely, sight and taste.

Only too often a mere look or a yielding to indiscreet curiosity has worked the loss of a soul or exposed it to the last evil straw. We note that Job was ever careful to guard over his eyes. *"Pepigi foedus cum oculis meis,"* says he, *"ne unquam cogi-*

tares de virgine." And "why did he make this pact with his eye, rather than with his mind or heart?" asks St. Gregory. Because it is altogether natural to think upon what one has seen, and because one thinks mostly upon things that have caught the eye: "*Visum sequitur cogitatio.*" Our mind is as a mirror that receives through the senses, and through the eyes particularly, the images of things external. The memory conserves these images and the intellect considers and ruminates on them: wherefore if one would have nought but good thoughts, let him see to it that no evil or dangerous image enters his brain. Modesty will be his safeguard in this matter, and let it be remarked here that the afore-said virtue cannot be lacking to any degree in an ecclesiastic. It is best characterized as delicacy and circumspection.

Nor is it of a whit less importance that the sense of taste be mortified; for intemperance also is dangerous, more dangerous perhaps to innocence than curiosity. "*Qui delicate nutrit servum suum, sentiet eum contumacem,*" says the Scripture. Can there be any doubt as to who is the slave alluded to, of whom the Spirit warns us, bidding us anticipate

its revolts and recommending us make it obedient and docile by privation? It is the body, it is the flesh, destined to be under the rule of reason, but which does little else than prompt us to shirk, to shake off the yoke, and to rid itself of all restraint or dependence: "*Video legem in membris meis repugnantem legi mentis meae*," says the Apostle, "*Quoniam legi Dei non est subjecta, nec enim potest*. And he recommends sobriety to the ministers of the church in the same breath in which he urges chastity: "*Oportet esse sobrium, pudicum. Diaconos similiter pudicos, non multo vino deditos*;" in the ordination allocution, the pontiff improves the opportunity to bring home this advice to the subdeacon, "*Si usque nunc inhonesti, amodo casti, amodo sobrii*." And after all, it is natural enough that intemperateness should do harm to soul and body. We have God's word for it that there is passion in wine, and experience teaches that it is in almost any nourishment not taken with moderation.

If St. Jerome is to be believed, it would be little short of a miracle were a man chaste and not temperate. *Dicat quisque quod volet. Ego loquor conscientiam meam. Scio mihi abstinentiam et nocuisse intermissam et profuisse repetitam. Qui castus esse*

desiderat, studeat sobrietati. Neminem novi castum nisi sobrium: numquam ego ebrium castum putabo. Loth quem Sodoma non vicerat, vina vicerunt. This points one lesson for clerics at least; they should not be lovers of good cheer nor frequenters of banquets, but rather declining when possible, or, if it be a duty to attend, let them not be unmindful of the duty to give good example; for sobriety and moderation are expected of them: "*Convivium tibi fugiendum est saecularium. Facile contemnitur clericus qui saepe vocatus ad prandium, ire non recusat!*"

3. For all the more reason ought they keep away from gatherings and resorts altogether secular. Why? Simply because the atmosphere of such places is not that in which chastity thrives. On the contrary, what does flourish therein is sensuality, engendering unseemly desires, covetousness, and voluptuousness: "*Omne quod est in mundo est concupiscentia carnis, concupiscentia oculorum, et superbia vitae.*" Pleasure: that is the sole attraction thereto, and that is the only good that can be sought therein or be derived therefrom. Much though there be to see and hear, yet the whole parade and show is calculated to pamper the senses and effectually enervates the spirit. Love not the world, says

St. John; but above all don't seek the society that the world has to offer. Those who do can read you a lesson with a moral. He who does not know enough to avoid the danger will too late learn the magnitude of it. Give the world a wide berth; have as little as possible familiar dealing with it, and you will be the better and wiser for your wariness. Worldliness has been the beginning of the end for nearly every subdeacon who has dishonored his character and brought shame to the Church. "*Prima tentamina sunt feminarum frequentes accessus. Quam multos etiam fortes illecebra decepit! Quanti dederunt errori locum et dederunt suspicioni! Hospitiolum tuum aut raro aut numquam mulierum pedes terant. Omnes puellas et virgines Christi aut aequaliter ignora, aut aequaliter dilige. Solus cum sola absque arbitro vel teste ne sedeas. Ne in praeterita castitate confidas. Nec sanctior David, nec Samsone fortior, nec Salomone potes esse sapientior. Memento semper quod Paradisi colonum de possessione sua mulier ejecerit.*"¹ Each of these bits of wisdom repays meditation. And what is more, one may never disregard them unless to his sorrow.

¹ S. AMBROSE, *De Officiis Min.*, 1, 87. S. JEROME, *Epist.*, 52.

PART II.

MEDITATIONS ON MAJOR ORDERS.

THE ORDER OF SUBDEACON.

MEDITATION I.

THE EXCELLENCE OF CHASTITY.

FIRST POINT. Adore the Spirit of God, the author of all good thoughts and chaste desires: *Seminator casti consilii*.¹ He abides in honest souls with His divine grace that He may inspire and foster in them an esteem and a relish, as well as the practice of a pure and holy life. "Happy those whose way is without blame and whose heart is without taint or blemish." *Beati immaculati in via! Beati mundo cordi!*² Nothing here below is worthy to be compared to a chaste soul. All else that is treasured loses its worth if placed in the balance against it: *Omnis pon-*

¹ BREV., Off. S. *Caeciliae*, 22 nov.

² Ps., CXVIII, 1; MATT., v, 8.

deratio non est digna continentis animae. (ECCLI., xxvi, 20.) The Church can scarce give utterance to her regard for purity of heart. She thinks of the Mother of Our Savior and confesses herself at a loss how worthily to praise Her: *Sancta et immaculata virginitas, quibus te laudibus efferam nescio.*¹ So, too, the saints esteemed it more than life; and to the world, the flesh, and the devil, have ever the one reply, the same that the martyr gave to the tyrant who would seduce her, *Potius mori quam foedari.* "I had better, and would sooner die than stain my soul." (ST. BIBIANA.)

SECOND POINT. To conceive an esteem of this virtue such as it deserves, you may consider two things: what it supposes, and what it merits.

1. *Chastity supposes a great and strong soul.*
 (a) A pure soul cannot but be great, noble, and lofty. For what is it that makes for greatness of soul, or for pettiness? What is it that raises it in merit or degrades it? The tastes, the aspirations, the loves it has and cherishes; are not these what make or mar? *Haec sunt animae pedes,*² says St. Augustine. If it

¹ BREV., *Off. Annunciat.*, 25 mart.

² S. AUG., *In Joan.*, XLVIII.

be borne towards heaven, toward the things of God, it cannot but rise above grovellings and grovelling things. If it seek the satisfaction of the senses and the goods of this world's making, then it falls below even its own level; it degrades itself. More than this, not only does the soul lower or uplift itself according to the object of its affection, for every attachment is not only an union with the object, but also an identification therewith. Wherefore St. Augustine says: *Talis quisque est qualis ejus est delectio.*¹ If the object is gross and material, then the soul grows heavy, sluggish, and coarse: if sensual, then naturally it is ruled by the flesh, and is scarcely to be considered as spirit but as flesh, in the odious meaning of the word "*caro*," as the victims of the deluge of old. Whereas, if the object of its desires be supernatural and of the world to come, the soul becomes itself supernatural and, in the truest sense, spiritual: *Habet aliquid jam non carnis in carne.*² (ST. AUG.) *Non permanebit Spiritus meus in homine quia caro est.* (GEN., VI, 3.) If its object be divine, then itself becomes divine in some sort. *Qui adhaeret*

¹ S. AUG., *In I Joan.*, II, 3.

² S. AUG., *De sancta virgin.*, 12.

*Domino unus spiritus est.*¹ Such is the effect of purity. "It is to the soul as the chariot of Elias; it carries it on high to a place among the angels," says St. Ephrem.²

(b) The strength of a chaste soul corresponds to its nobility. The same is to be said of it as of its reward, the kingdom of heaven: *Violenti rapiunt illud.*³ How disengage the senses, how rise above prone nature, how rein the instincts of the flesh, unless one be sturdy of heart and of generous ardor? It is not enough that one strive to overcome vice: struggle, persevering struggle must be made: struggle against all manner of enemies; against one's self and one's evil inclinations: *Sensus enim et cogitatio humani cordis ad malum prona sunt ab adolescentia sua;*⁴ against the world and concupiscence: *Quoniam omne quod est in mundo concupiscentia carnis est;*⁵ against the devil who uses all his power and cunning to work our ruin: *Adversus rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae;*⁶

¹ I COR., VI, 12.

² S. EPHREM., *In Encom. de castitate.*

³ MATT., XII, 12.

⁴ GEN., VIII, 21.

⁵ I JOAN., II, 16.

⁶ EPH., VI, 12.

a chaste man, then, is ever an energetic man for that he triumphs over truly great obstacles. Well may Tertullian avow: *Fortius est in castitate vivere quam pro ea mori.*

2. To those who live in the practice of this virtue is promised the *predilection of our Saviour in this life and His eternal glory in the next.*

(a) *Qui diligit cordis munditiam habebit amicum regem.*¹ They who have kept their hearts pure, says St. John, are, like himself, the well beloved of the Master. They have a privileged share in His communications: *Quanto mundior corde, tanto capacior Christi.* Being the best fitted to enter into His designs and to become the instruments of the Holy Spirit, He naturally prefers to use them for the accomplishment of His most high purposes. He gives to them a choice vocation. He makes use of their example, of their ministry, of their word to multiply the number of pure souls, to put to shame those who have denied Him, to recall the seduced from their weakly and disorderly ways. 'Tis among them He seeks those whom He would call into the

¹ PROV., XII, 11.

sanctuary and to the ministry of His altar: *Quis ascendet in montem Domini, aut quis stabit in loco sancto ejus? Innocens manibus et mundo corde.*¹

And His ministers who are conspicuous by their labors and by their successes, who contribute most to the glory of the Church, who are sought after as preachers, as confessors, as directors of souls, who perpetuate here on earth the generation of Apostles and Doctors, are they not those whose virtue is fairest before their fellow men: and may not one say of them what the High-Priest said to Judith, congratulating her on her victory over the enemy of the people of God: *Eo quod castitatem amaveris, ideo manus Domini confortavit te, et eris benedicta in aeternum.*²

(b) One may safely say, too, that this virtue is the gauge of glory in heaven. Heaven is the reward of courage, and the abode of purity. Nothing defiled can enter therein, says St. John.³ But pure souls, who on earth have lived the life of angels will live to enjoy their triumph forever.

¹ PS., XXIII, 4.

² JUDITH, XV, 11.

³ APOC., XXI, 27.

Virgins alone make up the court of the Lamb; they are with Him wherever He goes and they chant a canticle that other lips know not how to sing. It is not that impurity is the sole vice that excludes from heaven; but that there are few souls in hell that are not tainted by it, and furthermore, he who has learned to deaden the flesh and to sober the senses, has but little trouble in dealing effectively with his other enemies. It was an angel that brought this truth home to a certain soul called by God to lead on earth the risen life. The soul needed encouragement, and the angel appearing addressed her directly, repeating the promises made by Our Lord Himself through the mouth of St. John to the pastors of the seven churches of Asia at the approach of persecution. "Take heart," said he, "for I wish to be magnified in thee, and I give to each according to his deserts: *Vincenti dabo edere de ligno vitae. Vincenti dabo manna absconditum et nomen novum, quod nemo scit nisi qui accipit. Dabo illi potestatem super gentes et faciam illum columnam in templo Dei mei. Qui vicerit, non laedetur a morte secunda. Dabo illi sedere in throno meo sicut Ego vici et sedeo cum Patre meo in regno ejus, etc.*"

THIRD POINT. Enter into yourself and consider well the preciousness of this virtue of purity which the Church requires of her ministers; understand how you should honor it especially in holy priests, and with what earnestness you must desire it for yourself. Ordinarily, God gives the chosen soul a sensible appreciation of the preciousness of purity, even while yet in tender years; and to those destined for the priesthood He imparts His own great love for it, and aids them in a special manner to observe the rules thereof. They indeed can say what Solomon said of Wisdom: *Hanc amavi et exquisivi a juventute mea. Praeposui illam regnis et sedibus, et divitias nihil esse duxi in comparatione illius. Venerunt autem mihi omnia bona pariter cum illa, et innumerabilis honestas per manus illius. Quoniam ipsa dignos se circuit quaerens, et in providentia occurret illis.* Ask yourself if you have had always, and at present have the esteem you now know it deserves and if you pray God often and with earnestness to give you, or preserve in you the proper disposition of heart. Be the answer to this self questioning what it may, beg humbly of God that He preserve your virtue in its integrity, and resolve honestly and

firmly to accept any alternative, to pray even for death, sooner than be defiled by any voluntary impurity.

Potius mori quam foedari.

Jesu, amator castitatis, fac cor meum secundum cor tuum.

MEDITATION II.

MOTIVES FOR CHASTITY IN SACRED MINISTERS.

FIRST POINT. God wills, says St. Peter, that Christians be a people apart; that is, a holy nation, and that they exercise on earth a manner of priesthood by showing forth to the observation of all the virtues and life of Him who has called them to live in the light of His grace: *Vos genus electum, gens sancta, regale sacerdotium, ut virtutes annuntietis ejus qui de tenebris vos vocavit in admirabile lumen suum.*¹ For what the Church is in the world, the clergy, and above all the priesthood must be in the Church; there should be as marked a contrast between the virtue of a cleric, as there should be between a Christian and a man as yet unregenerated

¹ PET., 11, 9.

by baptism, or unenlightened by teachings of faith. God's ordained representatives are naturally bound to be not only a reminder to the faithful and to others of His purity, but to be also a counterpart of it. They must take unto themselves, and as primarily addressed to themselves the words, *luceat lux vestra coram hominibus ut videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in coelis est.*¹ Through them, through their life and personality must the Spouse of Christ reveal Her sanctity without spot or blemish; *non habens maculam aut rugam aut aliquid hujusmodi, ut sit sancta et immaculata.*² They are under obligation to be models of modesty, of purity, of chastity, and of innocence: *Exemplum fidelium in castitate, in integritate, in gravitate.*³ To be without sin is in itself not enough; their life must bespeak their virtue, if it is to be a model to others aiming at like perfection, in order that they may be inspired with a love of what is becoming in a Christian, the love of decency and of purity: *Oportet esse ornatum, pudicum, filios habentem subditos cum omni castitate.*⁴ Blessed be Our Lord for having

¹ MATT., v, 16.² EPH., v, 27.³ I TIM., iv, 12; TIT., ii, 7.⁴ I TIM., iii, 2, 8.

called His ministers to such perfection and for His eager and ready willingness to raise them thereto by His grace: *Ut sint sicut luminaria in mundo.*¹ Pray Him to deepen in your soul the nobility of sentiment, the courage, the detachment, the fidelity and constancy so sorely needed to keep you in virtue all the days of your life.

SECOND POINT. Think well upon the three motives the Church has for requiring of her sacred ministers a life of perfect chastity: they are, the glory of God, the spirit of Our Savior, and the interests of souls.

1. *The glory of God.* A man consecrated to the ministry, in devoting himself to the service of the altar, gives up himself, ceases to belong to himself. He is become a man of God, and it is for God that he now must live. To God's service and glory ought to be referred all he has and is; his time, strength, understanding, inclinations, and love. All these he consecrated to God when taking Him for his portion. But to make good this promise, that is, to really have no other portion than God, to live for Him alone, must one not live his days in

¹ PHIL., II, 15; PONTIF., *De Acolyth.*

all chastity, in perfect chastity? Whoever contracts an alliance with another, who attaches himself legitimately to some one other than God, engages his time and solicitude; he thereby shares his heart with another: *Qui cum uxore est, sollicitus est quae sunt mundi, et divisus est.*¹ On the contrary, he who remains free and unattached can belong wholly to God. If he loves Him, then he will love Him with a whole heart, with undivided affection; his pre-occupations will be of God; God's service will be his occupation, God's good pleasure will be his concern and guiding principle, and he will scarce have any other care than the accomplishment of God's will: *Qui sine uxore est, sollicitus est quae Domini sunt, quomodo placeat Deo.*² Having renounced for God both family and other temporal prospects, there should be little that he is not ready to do for the kingdom of heaven: *propter regnum coelorum.*³ Nothing withholds or daunts him; nothing thwarts his purpose to be an apostle. He knows that he can count on the aid and the blessing of heaven. It may not be said of him, "He is without posterity,

¹ I COR., VII, 33.

² MATT., XIX, 12.

³ I COR., VII, 32.

therefore what of good hath he done on earth." "For if he is faithful to the alliance," saith the Lord, "I will make compensation for his sacrifices; I will give him a name of greater worth than that of son or daughter. I will lead him to the holy mountain; I will show him into My house which is for all a house of prayer and I will be pleased with the oblations and the holocausts he shall offer on My altars:" *Haec dicit eunuchis; Qui tenuerint foedus meum, dabo eis in domo mea locum et nomen melius a filiis et filiabus. Adducam eos in montem sanctum meum. Holocaustum eorum et victima eorum placebunt mihi super altari meo.*¹

2. *The spirit of our Savior.* It is the antithesis of the spirit of the flesh and sensual inclinations: *Concupiscit contra carnem.*² Indeed He had about Him disciples who were not perfection; He said He was come for the sake of sinners, but it is easy to see His attitude towards impurity. Among His following, none but the chaste and pure of heart: we can note other failings in His chosen companions, but never anything that savors of impurity. Far from that,

¹ ISAI., LVI, 3-7; cf. *Sap.*, III, 14.

² GAL., V, 17.

says St. Jerome, He would have constantly about Him, in the place of angels, the most pure, whose virtue was without blemish; Mary, first of all; then Joseph, his foster father and thereafter the Apostles, virgins all or else become equivalently such for His sake; His sojourn then amongst men was, in this respect, a counterpart of His court in heaven: *Ut qui ab angelis adorabatur in coelis, haberet angelos adoratores in terra.*¹ But He wills to remain with us still in the Holy Eucharist, to abide there until the end of time; ought He not, then, continue to have a like circle of intimates; to be served by ministers animated with the same love of purity, strangers to sensuality as were the Apostles, accustomed to live the life of angels, that there may be nothing in them that would give offence to His divine purity? And is not this delicate honor due Him in a special sense in His Sacrament, since He there abides not as at Nazareth, in the infirmity of the flesh like to ourselves, but as the spirits, as a man transformed and spiritualized through His resurrection? The Church has always thought so; that is why she forbids to touch not only His sacred body, but even the

¹ S. JEROME, *Let.* XXII.

sacred vessels whereon His sacred body rests, any hands but the pure, and those only if vowed to purity. Remark too, that by her rites, by her prayers, by her instructions, she seeks untiringly to instill into the minds and hearts of her minsters the sentiment so well expressed by the author of the *IMITATION*: *O quam mundae debent esse manus illae, quam purum os, quam sanctum corpus, quam immaculatum cor erit sacerdotis, ad quem toties ingreditur auctor ipse puritatis! Oculi ejus simplices et pudici, qui corpus Christi solent intueri. Manus purae et ad caelum elevatae, quae creatorem coeli et terrae solent contrectare.*¹

3. *The welfare of souls.* If the ministry of the priest is to be right and fruitful, there must be on his part, zeal and authority, and on the part of the faithful, confidence and docility. And if these dispositions be lacking, wholly or in part, the priest may be to blame: undoubtedly so if his life seem not to be perfectly chaste. Any suspicion of defection on his part will weaken the good dispositions of his people. Furthermore, how could he possibly have any desire, much less any zeal for the safety of the

¹ *Fol. of Christ*, iv, 11.

souls of others, if he so jeopardize his own? A want of generosity to make the required sacrifice means that he can never be possessed of zeal enough to even ask complete abnegation of others. It would come with poor grace from him, and would meet with no response. If unable to forego or dispose of his rights and goods in favor of his ministry without regretting or failing to live up to his engagement, knowing that thereby he will injure souls and do harm to what ought to be nearest and dearest to a priest's heart, can such a one expose himself and sacrifice his life even for souls? Clearly he cannot expect to be zealous or even interested in the work of caring for souls.

So too would he lack authority. To have the right to urge others to make sacrifices, or to recommend a virtue, one must first urge by example. He even thereby imposes a sense of obligation on others. With what sort of grace can one ask or counsel others to bear or to accept privations that he finds are beyond his own strength, or how can one imbue them with a truth by which apparently he himself is not impressed? What ascendancy could the Apostle himself have had, if he had not been able to

say to his disciples when preaching virginity to them: *Volo vos esse sicut meipsum.*¹ *Imitatores mei estote?*² Certain it is that the faithful can have but little confidence, and consequently less docility towards those whom they know or believe to have other interests at heart than the honor and glory of God and the welfare of their souls. To the virgin priest, who has no other family than the children of God, who can be all things to all, they trust themselves without misgiving, submit without reluctance and open their hearts without reserve: while towards the father of a family, or a man of the world, be he ever so honorable, they bear nothing like the same respect, nor do they act with the same abandon, nor do they feel the same security.

THIRD POINT. How befitting, then, that God has given His Church in the keeping of a clergy holy and generous enough to impose on themselves a life of such detachment! And oh! what reason the Church has to watch jealously and carefully over the purity of her ministers! *O quam pulchra est casta generatio cum claritate, quoniam apud Deum nota est et apud homines!*³ Nothing does more honor

¹ I COR., VII, 7.

² I COR., IV, 16.

³ Sap., IV, 1.

or is more advantageous to her. Her enemies envy her that glory. It makes the devil gnash his teeth; he desires nothing better than to besmirch it, and never wearies of working and planning the undoing of virtue in clerics. Nature itself suggests that it is too much to attempt, and the world has ever ready some sort of inducement to weaken the high purpose and to insinuate a taste for its vanities. You must ask of Our Savior that He will not let you fail yourself and Him. Beg of Him the grace to be found ever faithful, to grow in the love of your holy engagements and to bear witness all the days of your pure and chaste life, to the power of His grace and the reality of your vocation.

Resolve to ask often of God purity without blemish; ask it through the intercession of the most pure Virgin Mary: *Ure renes nostros et cor nostrum, Domine, ut tibi casto corpore serviamus et mundo corde placeamus.*¹

¹ *Orat. Eccl.*

MEDITATION III.

THE OBLIGATION OF CHASTITY IN SACRED
MINISTERS.

FIRST POINT. To the love of innocence Our Lord joins an ardent zeal for the honor of His sanctuary; and these two dispositions bring Him to ask of His Church that she give Him ministers of exemplary modesty and chastity: *pudicos, sobrios, castos, continentes*.¹ Therefore she prepares for the altar only those young men whom she believes to be of sturdy integrity: and the education that she gives them is calculated primarily to preserve them against the contagion of vice and to strengthen them in virtue. She does not call to Orders any who have not fulfilled her hopes, whose conduct has given any ground for suspicion, or whose wisdom or immaturity causes any concern or misgiving: *quorum probata vita senectus sit qui sperent Deo auctore se continere posse*.² Even, she does not admit them to ordination until after the bishop has addressed them in her name, giving them her most serious and precise instructions. She warns them that the engagement

¹ I TIM., III, 8; TIT., I, 8.

² CON. TRID., Sess. XXIII, *De Reform.*, 12, 13.

they are about to make is irrevocable and sacred; that it involves obligations that may well inspire fear, that they do wrong to all concerned in assuming them if they have any reason to doubt either the worth of their resolution or their perseverance: *Iterum atque iterum attendere debetis attente quod onus ultro appetitis.*¹ Words that may soon be addressed to you, if not already so. You will do well to meditate them. You understand that the obligation, which the Church does not impose without your consent, and upon which she so earnestly asks that you reflect well, that you consult first of all and lastly your own heart, and that you test your strength beforehand—you understand that such an obligation is of exceptional gravity. Promise Our Lord that you will not let these warnings go unheeded, but that you will act with all the prudence He can desire and that the safety of your soul and the honor of His holy altar demands.

SECOND POINT. Dwell upon the extent of the law of chastity and the rigor of it in the life of a sacred minister.

1. *Just how far it extends.* (a) It reaches not

¹ PONTIF., *De Sub.*

only to external acts or to such as may give scandal, but even to the most secret workings of the mind and heart; to one's sentiments, thoughts, imaginations, pleasures and desires, be they ever so hidden or fugitive. The person of the priest must be as the Ark of the Covenant, *vestita auro purissimo, intus et foris*.¹ And it is not alone by the general law of chastity that all these acts are forbidden to the subdeacon as to everybody else, but by a further law, altogether particular, as well: because the cleric, in consecrating himself to God in subdeaconship, dedicates to divine purposes his entire person, that is, not only his body, but his soul with all its faculties; mind, heart, imagination; so that every impure act, even if mental, is on his part a violation of a sacred engagement and a profanation of a holy object, belonging to God. Thus is seen why the Church demands a chastity without blemish: *Estote nitidi, mundi, puri, casti*.² Like to the angels, says St. Bonaventure, the subdeacon should be: *Conformes esse debent archangelis, ut scilicet eorum mens et conscientia ab imaginatione et appetitione carnalitatis sit remota, sicut natura angelica ab omni*

¹ EXOD., XXXVII, 1.

² PONTIF., De. Diac.

*tali conditione esse dignoscitur aliena.*¹ (b) And by the fact that every impure act, internal or external, is forbidden because of your state, so for the same reason must you avoid, as far as is morally possible, any occasion that would expose you to sins of this sort: *Quasi a facie colubri fuge peccatum.*² *Nec nominetur in vobis sicut decet sanctos.*³ Here particularly does one see the extent of the law of chastity, i.e., in the obligation of avoiding occasions: in fact, the said obligation is found to be very extensive and manifold for a priest; see how often he is exposed to bad thoughts, to suggestions, etc. These multiply the precautions to be taken, provided of course, it be his purpose to render harmless the use he is obliged to make of his faculties, his eyes, his imagination, etc., in the matter of reading, visiting, and other intercourse he must have with people by reason of his ministry. He ought, according to the Pontifical, to be quite beyond the stage when these things are an occasion of sin to him, and the inclinations of the flesh should be under control and mortified: *Estote ergo assumpti a carnalibus desideriis et terrenis con-*

¹ S. BONAVENT., *De Eccl.*
Hierasch.

² ECCL., XXI, 2.

³ EPH., v, 3.

*cupiscentiis quae militant adversus animam.*¹ (c) The perfection of purity and the perfection of fidelity are to endure till death. For the ordinary faithful there are in this matter some obligations that are also absolute and never cease to bind; but there is also a limit as to time and quality of their restrictions. The law of marriage is quite different from that of celibacy. The obligation of those in Holy Orders is absolute and irrevocable: it does not admit of mitigation or derogation. It is not chaste priests that Christ wants to see at His altar, but virgin priests or those who are vowed to perpetual and virginal purity: *Qui digni habebuntur saeculo illo, neque nubent, neque ducent uxores, sed erunt sicut angeli Dei in coelos.*² The obligation which the Church imposes upon the subdeacon should not be less enduring than the character which he receives or the powers conferred. And this is one of the first of the words of warning that come from the mouth of the bishop: *Hactenus liberi estis, licetque vobis pro arbitrio ad saecularia vota transire. Quod si hunc ordinem susceperitis, amplius non licebit a proposito resiliire, sed perpetuo castitatem, Deo adjuvante, servare oportebit.*³

¹ *De. Diac. Conf.* ² *LUKE., XX, 35.* ³ *PONTIF., De. Sub.*

2. *The rigor of the law of chastity to which the sub-deacon is held.* It is certain that it is considerably more rigorous for him than for a lay person, and that in violating it he is correspondingly more culpable. There can be no question of these truths: The Church, by her instructions addressed to the clergy as well as by her vigilance in watching over the morals of her ministers and the severity with which she reproves the least delinquencies, and the lay folk, too, even the least exacting and least religious minded of them, are of one accord on the matter of priestly virtue. Howsoever indulgent the latter may be towards their own disorderly doings, they have no mercy on the unfaithful priest, and hence in addition to the other penalties incurred, there are the infamy and dishonor in the eyes of the people. And why this rigorous censure? For two causes, principally, which give to the infidelity of a sacred minister the character of sacrilege and perjury. (a) Perjury, because his fall from virtue is in violation of a most sacred engagement, of his word given to God solemnly, before the holy altar, and before the whole Church. The habit he wears, the functions he fulfils, the confidence he enjoys, the respect

shown him, all these are reminders of his engagement and witnesses to it. And yet he goes back on it; he fails his word, breaks his promise. If his sin be public, he outrages the Church as well as dishonors himself; if secret, he covers his unworthiness by the most hateful hypocrisy. Nothing to be wondered at, then, if he be judged severely, or that his conduct inspire so much disgust and abhorrence. (b) The violation of a sacred promise is at the same time a sacrilege, a wretched profanation of what has been vowed by the subdeacon himself to the worship of God. It is not a mere offence to God in His sanctuary or disrespectful treatment of the vessels wherein He reposes; it is the dishonor of a sacred person, and of the sort most injurious to his character: one can fitly apply to him in their most rigorous sense the words of St. Paul to the sinful Corinthians: *An nescitis quoniam membra vestra templum sunt Spiritus Sancti, quem habetis a Deo et non estis vestri?*¹ *Templum enim Dei sanctum est quod estis vos. Si quis templum Domini violaverit, disperdit illum Deus.*² The holier the object profaned, the more crying the profanation. The sanctity of the subdeacon sur-

¹ I COR., VI, 19.

² I COR., III, 16.

passes that of material temples or of vases wherein God reposes, does it not? Wherefore is not the sin of impurity that which most hurts the honor and respect due to the Lamb without spot?

THIRD POINT. Acknowledge before God how great is the obligation that the law of chastity lays upon His ministers, and also the vigilance and fidelity one has need of to be ever what the sacred ministry demands. *Abundet in eis*, says the bishop, *pudor constans, innocentiae puritas et spiritualis observantia disciplinae*.¹ Ordinary purity will not be enough: *Quomodo mansuetudo, patientia, sobrietas, etc., debent esse in eis eminentia, sic et castitas propria, et ut ita dixerim, pudicitia sacerdotalis, ut non solum ab opere se immundo abstineant, sed etiam a jactu oculi et cogitationis errore mens Christi corpus confectura sit libera*.² Before assuming so great an obligation to perfection one must be able to count on receiving great graces, and consequently be assured of having a true vocation. Grant, Lord, that I may neglect nothing that may serve to enlighten me as to your holy will in my regard. I would seek to know nothing but your good pleasure, and would do so with all

¹ PONTIF., *De. Presb.*

² S. JEROME, *In Tit.*, 1.

my heart; not only would I know it, but I would embrace it with all fidelity. I would that I may say with the same sincerity as St. Peter; *Si tu es, Domine, jube me venire ad Te super aquas.*¹ If it be really Thou that callest me to this, then I have nothing to fear, being near to Thee. Nevertheless, I say to Thee as before, and I will never cease to say with the humility and generosity of one of thy saints: *Da, Domine, quod jubes et jube quod vis.*²

*Dealba me, Domine, et munda cor meum, ut in sanguine Agni dealbatus, gaudiis perfruar sempiternis.*³

MEDITATION IV.

IF YOU WOULD BE PURE, LOVE AND FREQUENT THE HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR.

FIRST POINT. Adore Our Lord as the model and source of all purity. His humanity is not as ours, the fruit of flesh and blood. The Man-God has been formed miraculously by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and His Mother gave Him to the world without prejudice to her virginity. Thus He is pure and holy in every fiber of His being;

¹ MATT., XIV, 28.

² Confess., L. X. C.

³ *Orat. Sacerdotis ante Missam.*

in His body as well as in His soul. Nothing in Him bears even a trace of sin: nor is anything in Him that could be an allurement thereto, either for Himself or for others. More innocent and more pure than our first parents coming from the hands of the Creator, His sacred flesh inspires only chaste thoughts and pure affections. His very environment, His glorious mother, His foster father, His first disciples, give the impression of angelic innocence. Such was Our Savior during His mortal life. Without really increasing His purity, His resurrection rendered it still more beautiful and dazzling. He reassumes His first body, the same which He received from Mary, but reassumes it transformed, spiritualized, glorified, leaving in the tomb whatever it had of mortality or susceptibility to pain. *Prius quod animale, deinde quod est spirituale*,¹ says the Apostle. *Dominus enim spiritus est*.² Now this same purity which seemed to make of Him a pure spirit, He wishes to share with the members of His mystical body, in so far as is compatible with their actual state. His spirit is vivifying and seeks to pervade and indue with its life and action its every member: *Factus est in*

¹ I COR., XV, 46.² II COR., III, 17.

*spiritum vivificantem.*¹ The union of the soul with Him in the Blessed Sacrament signifies the change that should be effected thereby in the soul: it ought become like Him, altogether spiritual and heavenly in its life. *Qui adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est.* Beg this Divine Savior to do for you by virtue of His Body and Blood, that which He has deigned to do for so many others; to purify your heart and your senses, to give you the modesty and innocence that will render you less unworthy to live at His side and to take part in His mysteries; *O fons puritatis, Jesu Domine, me immundum munda tuo sanguine!*²

SECOND POINT. In order to judge of the help to a pure life offered us by the Holy Eucharist, consider three things: the nature of Holy Communion, the testimony of the saints, and the evidence of facts.

1. *What Holy Communion is.* (a) *It is a mystery of union.* Could any union be more intimate than that realized at the holy table, where Our Savior enters into us really and substantially, as He entered into the bosom of His Divine Mother? Certainly He could not so unite Himself to us, or take up His abode with us, and not will that we con-

¹ I COR., xv, 35.

² S. THOM., *Off. SS. Sac.*

form our spirit to His, that we share His life, that we partake of His dispositions, in loving that which He loves, and in hating what He hates. But, to so live in accord with Him, what is more necessary than a love of purity and a detachment from sensual affections. He has love for pure hearts only: *Diligit cordis munditiam*. He is holy, innocent, without spot: *Sanctus, innocens, impollutus*. He cannot suffer the least stain: *Quae enim participatio justitiae cum iniquitate? Quae autem conventio Christi cum Belial?*¹ It is to express His sovereign purity, no less than to represent the reality of immolation on the altar that the Church, after St. John, gives Him the name of *Lamb of God*. Conceive then, how great is our obligation to be pure if we would be united to Him, and judge if He could have devised a more potent means of inducing us to become such than to give Himself so unreservedly to us and to invite us to Him so frequently. Can it be possible that we assist at the Holy Sacrifice, approach the Holy Table, visit Him in His tabernacle abode, and not hear Him say to us as to the ministers of the Old Law: *Qui maculam habet, contaminare non debet*

¹ II COR., VI, 14.

*sanctuarium meum;*¹ and not say to ourselves with the author of the IMITATION: *O quam mundae debent esse manus, quam purum os, quam sanctum corpus, quam immaculatum cor, ad quod toties ingreditur auctor ipse puritatis!*²

(b) *It is a mystery of soul nourishment; a communication of supernatural life.* Our Savior did more than wish that our hearts be united to His through His real presence in the Blessed Eucharist. To more surely effect the much desired union, He made of His Body and Blood a veritable Sacrament. The Sacraments effect what they signify. The Holy Eucharist, then, has all that is needed to really impart to us His spirit and virtues: and this result takes effect infallibly in those hearts that receive Him worthily. *Sicut ego vivo propter Patrem, et qui manducat me et ipse vivet propter me.*³ During His mortal life there went forth from Him virtue that healed the sick and drove out demons. In like manner, and more potently and surely, there comes from the Eucharist a grace which purifies souls and strengthens them in well-doing. It works in the

¹ LEVIT., XXI, 23.

² I MIT., IV, 11.

³ JOHN., VI, 48.

heart quite the same as did the coals of fire on the lips of the prophet Isaias: *Non enim simplex lignum fuit, sed igni unitum: ita et panis communionis non est simplex panis, sed unitus divinitati.*¹ *Si angelus ille exterminator, cum linitos postes Israelitarum pervideret, transjecit gressus et non est ausus intrare, quanto magis diabolus se subtrahit, cum viderit Christi sanguinem dominici templi postibus dedicatum!*²

2. *No end of witnesses corroborate all this.* There is the Church, who applies to the Eucharistic bread and wine the words of the prophet Zachary: *Quid bonum ejus, et quid pulchrum ejus nisi frumentum electorum et vinum germinans virgines?*³ Herein she gives to the consecrated host the name of *frumentum electum* and *panis angelorum*, because it has the virtue to vivify those who are nourished by it and to enable them to live after the manner of the angels and the blessed in heaven. But it is to the doctors and holy priests in particular that we turn for instruction on this matter. "When one has once known the relish of the flesh of the Son of God," says St. Gregory of Nyssa, "one has no longer any desire for

¹ S. JOHN DAM., *De. fid. Orth.* LV, 13.

² S. CHRYSOSTOM, *In Joan.*, Hom. 84.

³ ZACH., IX, 27.

other things that once pleased." *Qui amat hanc carnem non est amicus carnis suae, et qui amat hunc sanguinem erit mundus a sensuali sanguine.*¹ "This food quiets the passions," says St. Cyril of Alexandria, "it deadens concupiscence and frees us from the tyranny of the senses." *Sedat, dum in nobis est Christus, saevientum in nobis legem, perturbationes animi extinguunt, aegrotos sanat.*² Thus we see why the Fathers of the Church have no hesitation in ascribing to the Eucharist the virtue they behold increasing and thriving in the holiest souls. "*Si quis vestrum,*" says the Abbot of Clairvaux to his disciples, "*non tam saepe modo, non tam acerbos sentit iracundiae, invidiae, luxuriae motus aut caeterorum hujusmodi, gratias agat Corpori et Sanguini Domini quia virtus sacramenti operatus est in eo.*"³ And St. Francis de Sales: "For the twenty-five years I have spent in the service of souls, experience has made me feel more and more deeply the all-powerful virtue of the Eucharist for preserving from evil, strengthening in grace, and, as it were, making souls to share in the divine life. By reason of uniting

¹ S. GREG. NYSS., *In Cant.*

² S. CYRIL ALEX., *In Joan.*, 11.

³ S. BER., *In cant. Dom.*, 1.

itself to the Lamb without spot, and nourishing itself with innocence, purity, and sanctity, the faithful soul soon becomes all fair, innocent, holy, and pure.”¹

3. *History bears out all this in a really striking manner.* No one can pretend that purity had any true, established place in, or hold on society until the advent of Christianity and through Christianity; and furthermore, it was not propagated in the world except with, and by Christianity. The generation of virgins dates back to the Savior. It was the Blood of Calvary that germinated them, and that does so still; for it is the Blood of our altars that gives the increase and perpetuates the throng. Virginity and perfect chastity thrive only within the Church, among the members of the Church. Only those vow their lives to chastity who make of the Holy Eucharist a fervent and assiduous use. Hence do a great number of Doctors behold in vision at the altar the reality of the symbol shown to us by St. John in the Apocalypse; the Lamb on the Mount of Sion, surrounded by the purest and fairest of his disciples. *Ecce Agnus stabat supra montem Sion, et cum eo centum quadraginta quatuor millia. Hi empti sunt*

¹ *Introduct. to the Devout Life.*

*primitiae Deo et Agno. Hi sequuntur Agnum quocumque ierit. Virgines enim sunt.*¹

THIRD POINT. Soon we shall be priests; we shall consecrate and receive each day the Body and Blood of the Savior: *Panem caelestem accipiam, et nomen Domini invocabo.*² We shall be able to say then, as St. Agnes to her tempter: *Mecum habeo custodem corporis mei. Corpus ejus corpori meo sociatum est et sanguis ejus ornavit genas meas, cujus mater virgo est. Ipsi soli servo fidem, Ipsi me tota devotione committo.*³ Let us guard against our becoming the recipients of so great a favor in vain; let us have a care to profit by the special intimacy we enjoy with Jesus in the Sacrament of the altar. Let us strengthen our faith in the real presence of our Divine Savior, and grow from day to day in earnestness of desire to be united to Him. He ascribed the purity of His apostles to the instructions He had given them and to the care they had taken to put those instructions into practice: *Jam vos mundi estis, propter sermonem quem locutus sum vobis.*⁴ Beyond a doubt, we can derive greater fruit still from His precious Body and Blood,

¹ APOC., XIV, 1, 5.

² *Missal.*

³ BREV., *Off. of St. Agnes.*

⁴ JOHN, XV, 3.

if we are but wise and men of faith enough to nourish ourselves with It regularly and with the becoming dispositions.

In our thanksgivings and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, let us learn and love to pray in these meaningful words: *Anima Christi sanctissima, sanctifica me.*

MEDITATION V.

**IF ONE WOULD BE VERY PURE, HE MUST HAVE
GREAT DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED
VIRGIN MARY.**

FIRST POINT. Offer your homages to the Blessed Mother of God, the Virgin Queen of the Church. Tender Her your heartfelt love, confidence, and respect, acknowledging these to be Her due. For is it not because of Her dignity as Mother of God that She is Queen of the Church, and that the clergy venerate Her as their patron. But it is by Her virginity or rather by Her purity without fleck or stain that She has merited to be chosen the Mother of the Word Made Flesh. "*Virginitate placuit*,"¹ says St. Bernard. What esteem then, should you have

¹ *Super Missus est.*

for this virtue, and with what ardor ought you pray and work that it may rule in you, quite as it should! After the Holy Virgin Mary, there is no one that is so intimately united to Christ than His priests. Your vocation destines you to bring Him forth invisibly on the altar, as Mary once bore Him visibly to the world. Each day you will hold Him in your hands and receive Him into your heart, as She received Him into Her bosom and carried Him about in her arms. Towards Him in the Blessed Sacrament, you will have quite the same functions to perform as Mary at Bethlehem and at Nazareth. We know well that it was His pleasure to be with and near Her: it will also be His pleasure to have you near Him if He finds in you those same virtues, that purity, that innocence, religion, and holiness which so pleased Him in Her. Humbly avow to Mary how far removed you are from Her in perfection, and even from the perfection that should adorn your soul even at this moment, and pray Her to obtain for you the virtue that befits your dignity, in the measure at least that is indispensable to the right fulfilment of your sacred functions:

*Virgo singularis,
Inter omnes mitis,
Nos culpis solutos,
Mites fac et castos.*

SECOND POINT. Consider the motives a sub-deacon has for being devoted to the Blessed Virgin. First, devotion to Her is a gauge of innocence; secondly, it is a sure means of obtaining the very virtue most needed.

1. *This devotion is a gauge of innocence and a guarantee against vice.* To explain. Purity is the peculiar characteristic of the most Blessed Virgin. It is the idea of this virtue that first presents itself when we think of the Divine Mother. Her other qualities, her humility, her modesty, her spirit of religion, her detachment from self and the world, seem to be secondary, having a bond of connection therewith, indeed, but as conditions or consequences thereof. Whenever we think of Mary is it not as the purest of creatures first of all, and then by consequence, the humblest, the most modest, the most devout, that is or ever can be. Whence it follows that one cannot love, venerate, or admire the Blessed Virgin and not admire, venerate, and love in the same

proportion the purity which is her chief characteristic, and with it all the other virtues forming as it were its cortege. Therefore, the greater devotion one has for Mary, the greater esteem will he conceive for holy purity: the more will he seek to make it rule his heart: the more ardently will he pray for it and the more careful will he be to observe its rules. Nothing is surer than that he who cherishes a devotion to the Mother of God is as far removed as he can well be from the vice of impurity and sensual inclination. It is equally certain that to raise a soul above the senses, to inspire it with uplifting thoughts and pious sentiments, it is necessary only to instill a loving regard for the Queen of Virgins. That one may be ever mindful of this, or at least to recall it often to mind, one cannot do better than observe the wholesome advice of the Apostle: *Quaecumque sunt vera, quaecumque pudica, quaecumque justa, quaecumque sancta, quaecumque amabilia, quaecumque bonae famae, si qua virtus, si qua laus disciplinae, haec cogitate.*¹

2. *It is for the clergy and faithful, and for the former in particular, an unfailing means of obtaining from*

¹ PHIL., IV, 8.

God perfect purity of mind and heart. (a) The Virgin Mother has more influence with the Sacred Heart than all the rest of the blessed together, and we may not doubt of Her incomparable zeal in our behalf that we may share richly in the communication of Her Son's spirit and gifts. "Wherefore, whosoever we be," says St. Bernard, "let us ask heaven's graces through Her."¹ *Quaeramus gratiam et per Mariam quaeramus.*" And of course, "let us ask above all the grace of purity. This it is She desires most to obtain for hearts devoted to Her; and this also is the grace that God most readily leaves to Her dispensation. For is it not the teaching of the Doctors, that to honor His saints, God is pleased to propagate through them the virtues they have practised and exemplified most? Thus, as by preference we ask zeal of the Apostles, fortitude and constancy of the martyrs, mortification of the penitents, and the spirit of prayer of the religious and hermits, so too, should we ask of the virgins the virtue of purity, and especially of the Queen of Virgins should we ask it, for we are the more likely to get it through Her who has drawn so many to holy purity as well by

¹ *Super Missus est.*

Her aid as by Her example: *Adducentur regi virgines post eam; proximæ ejus afferentur tibi.*¹ (b) But if there be any in the Church who may claim Her intercession with greater confidence and who have more urgent reason than others to claim it, are they not the clergy, the ministers of Her Son; they whom He has given to Her as sons in the person of St. John, and whose virtue is of much more import to both the Son and to the Mother? She knows well, and is ever mindful that if they lead a pure life and if their virtue is without reproach, they will propagate and promote devotion to Her; that they will give glory to Our Savior, because they will be holy priests. While on the contrary, if they lack purity they will lack everything, and instead of honoring their ministry, they will dishonor it; they will defile souls rather than sanctify them. Know then that Mary's love for Her Son and for the Church is the measure of Her zeal in procuring for those in Holy Orders the grace of exemplary chastity.

THIRD POINT. Perhaps you already know by experience what a help to leading a christian life is devotion to the Mother of God, and how unfailing

¹ Ps., XLIV, 15.

is recourse to Her in weakness, doubt, temptation, and when the devil plies us most. Perhaps even it is to Her that you can attribute your boyhood's attraction to the holy priesthood and the love of holy purity. Have you thought to thank God that He put this devotion so early into your heart; and do you pray Him that He may preserve it in you, and that it may bear fruit to your soul? It is one of the surest and most precious marks of vocation and of perseverance: *Ego mater pulchrae dilectionis et timoris et agnitionis et sanctae spei.*¹ *Qui me invenerit inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino.*² See if you esteem this devotion enough, and if you do anything to strengthen and increase it in your heart. Are you conscious of a real desire to do honor to the Blessed Virgin, to please Her, to imitate Her and to deserve favors of Her? The fear of giving offence to Her, of hurting Her loving heart, of lacking in the gratitude you owe Her; does any of these thoughts help or decide you to make the sacrifices asked of you or to remain faithful and loyal when sore tried and tempted? What desire have you to merit Her protection all through your life, and to put to better and

¹ ECCLI., XXIV, 24.

² PROV., VIII, 35.

better account all Her favors? Let your resolutions be made accordingly, and pray Mary to give strength to them.

*Virgo singularis,
Inter omnes mitis,
Nos culpis solutos
Mites fac et castos.*

MEDITATION VI.

**TO KEEP YOUR HEART PURE YOU MUST NEEDS
HAVE NOTHING LESS THAN A HORROR
OF THE LEAST IMPURITY.**

FIRST POINT. Adore the Lamb of God, The Word Made Flesh, seeking to instil into the hearts of His disciples an abhorrence of vice. He wishes them to fear sin more than any ill that can befall them; that they will suffer trial of any sort, wrongs, and all manner of anguish, rather than draw upon themselves the rigors of divine justice: *Ostendam vobis quem timetis*, He says to them. *Nolite timere eos qui occidunt corpus, animam autem non possunt occidere, sed potius timete eum qui potest et animam et corpus perdere in gehennam.*¹ That impurity is

¹ LUKE, XII, 5; MATT., X, 28.

the vice He most loathed and abhorred there can be no doubt. He bids them take special care in order to avoid it. Those strong words to be read in St. Matthew are to be applied directly to this vice: *Si oculus tuus scandalizat te, erue eum et projice abs te. Et si dextera manus tua scandalizat te, abscide eam et projice abs te. Expedit enim tibi ut pereat unum ex membris tuis quam totum corpus tuum mittatur in gehennam.*¹ And again, according to Doctors of the Church, this stern and awful sentence: *Qui scandalizaverit unum de pusillis, expedit ei ut suspendatur mola asinaria in collo ejus, et demergatur in profundum maris.*² Pray Our Lord to burn into your heart these maxims and to give you to know and feel the motives and heart stirrings that made Him utter them. For sure it is the more you shrink in thought from impurity, the longer and the further removed will you keep from its contagion.

SECOND POINT. There are three leading considerations which are certain, if well pondered, to give you a sovereign and healthy aversion to whatever savors of impurity.

First, in doings of this kind *there is no such thing*

¹ MATT., v, 29.

² MATT., XVIII, 6.

as trivial or venial matter, that is, no *Parvitas materiae*. Impurity as such is absolutely incompatible with sanctifying grace. And the only cases in which it can possibly be a light fault are when the occasion to which one exposes himself is remote, or when there is lack of consent or of reflection. Hence if even an impure thought be knowingly and willingly entertained, then mortal sin is committed, whatsoever be the thought itself: whether purely mental, or a simple imagination, or a mere desire, it matters not at all, the sin is grave beyond a doubt. By that impure pleasure, sought after or only yielded to, positively adhered to or merely indulged, the soul has broken with God, forfeited His grace, and deserved rebuke, shame, and punishment for all eternity. This is sound theology, and questioned by none: "*Qui luxuriatur, vivens mortuus est*," says St. Jerome. (*Epistle* LXIX, 9.)

2. Secondly, a motive quite peculiar to us, is that the sin of *impurity in a sacred minister has an unusual character which aggravates its malice fearfully*. The subdeacon having given himself to God is consecrated to the service of the altar. Therefore, as the sacred vessels, he is bound over, made sacred

to the worship of God; 'tis for this that he is respected and honored as they are: and like them he may not be profaned or violated without sin more or less grave against religion. To lend himself to impurity, to be soiled by a deed of lust, whether in mind or body, is to do a sacrilegious thing, and sacrilegious, too, in the most hateful sense and manner. For there are degrees even in profanation of sacred things. To commit a sin in a holy place is a profanation thereof; to steal a sacred vessel is a sin against the virtue of religion; to put it to profane or vulgar uses is a worse sin of the same order: yet none of these, though all sacrileges, can equal in malice and hatefulness the sin that lowers a sacred person to the meanest condition of being, and makes him subserve the ignoblest and uncleanest of ends. And this is what comes to pass if a minister in Sacred Orders yields at all to the passion of impurity. *Tollens membra Christi faceret membra meretricis.*¹ A sacred vessel is handed over to the unclean spirit, and a divine sanctuary is opened to his abominations. Yet the subdeacon had promised all the contrary on the day of his ordination. Needless

¹ I COR., VI, 15.

it is to dwell on the wretchedness of one who adds treachery and perjury to his impurity and sacrilege: reflect a moment on the import of these words of the Holy Spirit; *Cur tentavit Satanas cor tuum mentiri te Spiritui Sancto? Quare posuisti in corde tuo hanc rem? Non es mentitus hominibus, sed Deo.*¹ (ACTS, v, 4-5.)

3. A third motive is this, that a *sin of impurity is very often the beginning of the end for one already in Holy Orders*; and this for several reasons: (a) Because he is most likely to keep such a sin on his conscience for some length of time. Having had the weakness to commit the sin, he lacks the courage to avow it in confession; the confession is put off as long as can be, because he is too mortified to acknowledge the shame: *Erubescit reus videri quia nonnisi iudex esse debuerat.*² And if, meanwhile, the occasion arises of performing some sacred function, it is greatly to be feared that he will not have the grace or the courage to abstain. (b) Because furthermore sins of this sort leave in the soul a deep and strong impress that weakens it notably and induces an easy relapse when occasion again offers. *Maxi-*

¹ ACTS, v, 4, 5.

² S. CHRYSOSTOM, *Opus imperf.*

mae sunt adhaerentiae et difficile est ab eo vitio eripi, say the Theologians. (c) Because sins of impurity tend speedily to beget others of their kind and can and do lead easily to greater disorders: *Cogitatio parva delectationem parit, delectatio consensum, consensus actionem, actio consuetudinem, consuetudo necessitatem*.¹ (Cf. IMIT. I, XIII, 5.) (d) Because, the habit once contracted, one is likely to despair of return to God: and then there are but two alternatives, either to complete dishonor by braving the anathemas and censures, as did those wretches of whom the Apostle speaks, *qui tenebris obscuratum habentes intellectum, desperantes semetipsos tradiderunt impudicitiae, in operationem immunditiae omnis*;² or to hide their ignoble doings under the veil of hypocrisy, to be as the whitened sepulchres of which Our Lord spoke, all rottenness and infectious filth within: *Similes sepulchris dealbatis, quae a foris parent hominibus speciosa, intus vero plena sunt ossibus mortuorum et omni spurcitia*.³ Whatever is done, it is to be feared that the purpose of saving one's soul will be given up, remorse become vexatious and then stifled, followed by obstinacy or despair; the

¹ IMIT., I, XIII, 5. ² EPH., IV, 19. ³ MATT., XXIII, 27.

sequel, hell for all eternity: *Non dabunt cogitationes ut revertantur ad Deum suum, quia spiritus fornicationis est in medio eorum.* (Osee, v, 1.)

THIRD POINT. My God, when I think upon the danger, the shame, and the enormity of the vice of sensuality, it seems to me impossible that I could ever abandon myself to it. I say to myself, in the same frame of mind as Joseph, *Quomodo possum hoc malum facere et peccare in Deum meum?*¹

You have called upon me to struggle with this vice, to bring it to nought; You wish me to serve You, and to make use of me to reclaim those poor unfortunates whom the devil has made to fall through concupiscence. To this end You proffer me Your Spirit and all Your graces. Give me, O God, to be faithful to my vocation that I may contribute and help, in so far as I may, by my prayers, by my example, by my ministry, to lessen the number of victims to impurity. But I know something of my own weakness. I do not forget that we have all a common nature, and that there is not a fault committed by one sinner that may not as readily be committed by every one else and Your

¹ GEN., XXXIX, 9.

grace be not at hand to preserve therefrom. I would ask then, my God, the help of Your grace for all the days of my life, and I purpose to merit it by my prayers, by my heedfulness and vigilance, and by my faithfulness; keep me always, lest I be of the number of those unfortunate and wretched ones whom Your Angel must shut out forever from Your holy home. *Dicit Angelus: Foris canes et impudici et idolis servientes!* (APOC. XXII, 15.) *Non intrabit in eam aliquid coinquinatum aut abominationem faciens.* (APOC., XXI, 27.)

MEDITATION VII.

LEST YE ENTER INTO TEMPTATION, WATCH AND PRAY.

FIRST POINT. When the Savior said to His disciples on the eve of His passion; Watch and pray, He bethought Himself of their condition or position and the peculiar dangers to which they were exposed just then. Nevertheless it was a recommendation meaningful to all men that He addressed them; the means of perseverance indicated to them are recommended equally to all His disciples, whatever be the

trials or straits in which they find themselves or the dangers that seem to menace. *Quod dico vobis, omnibus dico: Vigilate.* (MARK, XIII, 27.) *Vigilate et orate. Opertet semper orare et non deficere.* (LUKE, XVIII, 1.) We have good reason, then, to apply to ourselves these words, since purity is ever liable to dangerous temptation. We ought to watch and pray, the more that our virtue is weak and our enemies are many, wily, and unrelenting: *Vigilate et orate*, Our Lord bids us, *ut non intretis in tentationem.* He does not say, watch and pray that we may not be tempted, for it is His purpose that our virtue be tried and be strengthened by such trial; but that we may not give way under temptation, and succumb thereto. It is as if He said, "If you do not keep guard over yourselves, and if you are not prompt in having recourse to God, you will come to know your weakness through bitter experience; you will walk into the traps prepared for you." Thank Our Lord for this monition, and take it to heart with docility and submissiveness. Don't merely take His word for this as truth, but take Him at His word; that is, put His warning to profit. Offer Him a sincere desire to watch and pray

always as He would have you do, in order to merit His help and to come off safe in all the dangers your virtue may have to run.

SECOND POINT. Think over the reason and importance of this two-fold recommendation.

1. *Necessity of vigilance: Vigilate.* Why must one always watch? Because one has always some danger to fear, because one is ever in the midst of enemies; and if one be not on his guard it is more than likely that he will walk into a well-laid trap or fall by a blow delivered from an unsuspected quarter. It augurs ill if advance is made onto the enemy's premises or into his neighborhood without wariness and reconnoitering. You know the hackneyed analogies of the scouts and sentinels and armies, and of the vessel on stormy seas, midst shoals and reefs and divers other menaces to its safety. Well, you perhaps have heard them so often that they scarce impress you. Be that as it may, you must not let go unheeded the warning and lesson they are intended to convey. It is all important that you be impressed by the need you have of being alive to the reality and imminence of your danger. Purity is more to you than a vessel or an army is to any-

body, and it is threatened by enemies and dangers as no army or vessel ever was; and, it should be added that the safety thereof is of as great concern to you and to the world. Know this, then, that without great vigilance the ruin and loss of purity is inevitable. The Doctors of the Church give you some idea as to how numerous and redoutable are the enemies and dangers to purity. There is idleness first of all, the lazy workless life. *Multam malitiam docuit otiositas. Haec fuit iniquitas Sodomaë, otium illius et filiarum ejus.* (ECC., XXXIII, 29, and EZEK., XVI, 41.) Then, there is love of sensual pleasures, of good cheer, and feasting: *Venter mero aestuans cito despumat in libidines.* (S. JER. EPIST. IV, 9.) Next pride, presumption, forgetfulness of the continual need one has of divine grace. *Occultam superbiam punit aperta luxuria.* (ROM., I, 24-25.) There is, too, curiosity, the concupiscence of the eyes and of the imagination and of the thoughts. *Ne dicatis vos habere animos pudicos si habueritis oculos impudicos. Ejusdem libidinis est videri et videre;* and again, there are reading, amusements, and various other secular dissipations: *Inter tantas voluptatum illecebras, ferreas etiam mentes libido domat,* says St. Jerome. (EPIST.,

iv.) Who will believe himself safe, without cause for fear and trembling as the Apostle says, in the midst of so many foes? *Itaque qui se existimat se stare videat ne cadat.* (I COR., x, 12.)

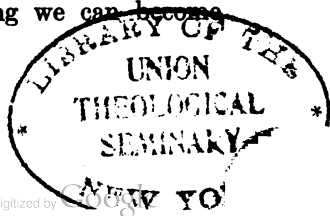
2. *Necessity of prayer: Orate.* The carnal instinct of man is the most depraved of all. Concupiscence has so made it keen and so perverted it that, at the very least, without a particular grace from heaven we could not brave its attacks with impunity, nor long resist its solicitations: *Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam.* This is a fact that the writer of the Book of Wisdom¹ learned by experience, and it seems to be confirmed by Our Savior in these words: *Non omnes capiunt verbum istud, sed quibus datum est.*

It follows then, says St. Augustine, that chastity is at once a virtue and a gift: a virtue, because God requires it of us and we are to employ our utmost strength to practise it fully; a gift, because to acquire it and to preserve it when acquired we have need of a special helping grace: *Jubet ergo Deus continentiam, et dat continentiam: jubet per litteram et dat per spir-*

¹ Ut scivi quoniam non possum esse continens nisi Deus det, adii Dominum et deprecatus sum. SAP., VIII, 21, and MATT., XIX, 11.

itum. S. AUG., EPIST., CLVII, 9.) But how make sure of the grace of God? There is but one means given to man whereby he may obtain it: prayer. God desires to give us this grace but He promises it to those only who ask for it. We must ask it then. We must repeat often in our hearts the prayer He has taught us to say to His Father: *Et ne nos inducat in tentationem*. Chrysostom has expressed all this very pithily: *In tentationem vadit, qui ad orationem non vadit*: also St. Augustine: *Ut castitas detur, humilitas meretur*. (S. CHRYS., *On Prayer*.) Briefly then it is in humbling one's self before God, in asking of Him the virtue of purity, in acknowledging one's inability to acquire it and helplessness to preserve it by one's unaided efforts, that one obtains this great mercy.

THIRD POINT. Thus we may apply to this virtue in particular what the Apostle said of sanctification and salvation in general: *Non est volentis, neque currentis, sed miserentis Dei*. (ROM. IX, 16.) Of course purity demands on our part good will and effort, vigilance and carefulness; but these will not suffice. Our unaided efforts can no more render us pure and chaste than by our own striving we can become



saints. The grace of God must second us and lead us on to our goal, and help us until it is reached: *Quis potest facere mundum de immundo conceptum semine? Nonne Tu qui solus es?* (JOB, XIV, 4.) How we should esteem prayer then! With what care and manly purpose we are to prepare our hearts for the spirit of prayer, with what earnestness and sincerity we are to ask it of God, and with what fidelity we are to foster it in us! Can one exaggerate the readiness with which we ought have recourse to God in prayer when we foresee any danger or when any difficulty tries us? No one will ever lack needed strength or yield to temptation if he is faithful to ask help of Heaven and to say humbly, as did the Apostles: *Salva nos, Domine; perimus. Fidelis est Deus, qui non patietur vos tentari supra id quod potestis, sed faciet etiam cum tentatione proventum ut possitis sustinere.* (I COR., x, 13.) Repeat often and earnestly the favorite prayer of St. Philip Neri: *Cor mundum crea in me, Deus.* Also that of St. Augustine: *Da quod jubes et jube quod vis.* (Confessions, x, 29.)

MEDITATION VIII.

TO SAFEGUARD YOUR REPUTATION AND YOUR VIRTUE, SHUN FAMILIARITY WITH THE WORLD AND WITH PERSONS OF THE WORLD.

FIRST POINT. Our Savior offers in His own person the truest model of holy purity. His appearance, His deportment, His converse with those about Him, all convey the impression of a "man from heaven, heavenly," living in the flesh, but not of the flesh; as detached from sensuality as the pure spirits in heaven; not only above the solicitations of corporal nature, but a stranger to its unworthy instincts. What He said of His Father, *Spiritus est Deus* (JOHN, IV, 24), the Apostle does not hesitate to say of Him, *Etenim Dominus Spiritus est.* (II COR., III, 17.) Certainly He showed Himself such while amongst us, in His relations with whomsoever came to Him to receive instruction or to ask a favor. The women flocked around Him as well as the men; mothers brought their children, too, that He might lay hands upon them. He received everybody with kindness; yet, one remarks that He was reserved with all. When He speaks to men and women it is as to souls, seeking to withdraw them from sin

and death and to turn them into surer ways. We call to mind particularly the Magdalen, the Samaritan woman, the poor unfortunate taken in adultery. His conduct never failed to evoke admiration of His virtue. Pray Our Savior to give you the wisdom, the detachment, the prudence, and the courage needful to imitate His example. Ask of Him to see to it that your relations with souls may be such as He will commend: never aught of familiarity or mere natural affection, but rather that your ministry be the gauge of all dealing with souls so that all who may behold will be inspired with respect for your virtue and esteem for your wisdom.

SECOND POINT. Two motives there are that should bring you to avoid as far as may be the society of the laity; they are the welfare of your soul and the honor of the ministry.

1. *The welfare of your soul.* The Scriptures are replete with maxims and examples showing the danger incurred to chastity by frequenting the company of persons of the world, and of women especially. Remember who it was that committed the first sin on earth and brought sin into the world and death upon us all: *A muliere initium factum est peccati et per*

illam morimur omnes. (ECCLUS., xxv, 33.) *Melior est iniquitas viri quam mulier benefaciens.* (ECCLUS., xxlii, 12.) The Doctors and Councils of the Church insistently recall to clerics these maxims and warn them not to expose their reputation and virtue by worldly, secular associations. There certainly is danger therein and *qui amat periculum in illo peribit*, says the Holy Spirit. Avoid especially familiarity: which of course should be out of the question with women. Follow St. Paul's and St. Jerome's advice and that given by the *Imitation of Christ*: *Omnes puellae et virgines Christi aut aequaliter ignora aut aequaliter dilige.* (S. JER., *Epist.* xxviii.) "Keep not much company with young people and strangers. Be not familiar with any woman; but recommend all good women in general to God. Desire to be familiar only with God and fly the acquaintance of man. We must have charity for all; but familiarity is not expedient." Do not permit needless visiting on their part, and make no exceptions. No presents, no tokens of regard or other such souvenirs. You may observe conventionalities with them, but anything further by way of contact is *dangerous*. And, you may not allege experience, wisdom, or age:

Nec in praeterita castitate confidas. Nec David sanc-tior, nec Samson fortior, nec Salomone potes esse sapientior. (S. JER., *Epist.* LII, 5.)

2. *The honor of your ministry.* There are of course things that *in se* are right enough, but which must be given up on account of interests jeopardized, the edification of others, or in order not to give scandal. *Omnia mihi licent*, says St. Paul, *sed non omnia expediunt. Omnia mihi licent sed non omnia aedificant.* Such certainly are, for example, considerable or intimate association of a priest with lay folks. *Non decet clericum vel fabulari vel domum frequentare.* (S. AUG.). The priest, then, ought to renounce these things whatever be the effort it cost him; and note, too, that the more of a sacrifice it is for him to give up these, the more is his duty to do so urgent. St. Chrysostom insists on this duty. "If you are weak, then your weakness forbids you these things; if you are sturdy enough of virtue, then the interests of others make the renunciation imperative. But are you really so sturdy if you balk or hesitate at this sacrifice? Are you stronger than St. Paul, than Job, than the holy hermits and monks?" Nor may you say: It matters little what

is thought of me, if only I be innocent and my conscience can in nothing reproach me. No, it matters very much that nothing but good be thought of you: *Caveto omnes suspiciones, et quidquid probabiliter fingi potest, ne fingatur ante devita.* (S. JER., *Epist. LII, ad Nepot.*) If we had but to consider ourselves it might be all very well; we might solace ourselves with the testimony of our own conscience. But we have to give thought to others and we are held to instruct and to edify them; hence we must say with the Apostle: "Being a minister of Jesus Christ, I will do honor to my ministry." *Ego ministerium meum honorificabo.* I would sooner that my life be given up than that, through my fault, my priestly ministry lose the respect that is its due. *Bonum est mihi magis mori quam ut gloriam quis evacuet.* (I COR., IX, 15.)

THIRD POINT. It is clear then, that whatever way you turn the need or even the duty of avoiding secular gatherings and undue familiarity with secular persons confronts you. Though you have no cause whatever for concern as to your own virtue or that of others on this account, still in the interest of your reputation or your ministry you must re-

nounce such needless intercourse. You have nothing in common as a priest with the world and worldliness. Do not count too much on the esteem of lay folks. Non-catholics are often distrustful, and those of our own flock who are sensual and corrupt readily believe insinuations, and not only are quick to remark anything that may give color to them or ground, even remotely, for suspicion, but too readily interpret the same unfavorably: "Charity thinketh no evil, and all is pure to the pure-minded:" remember, however, that the reverse is too often true. When worldlings and folks with no real religion in them see priests allowing themselves the same liberties and diversions as they themselves enjoy, they judge that he has the same instincts, that he is but following the same impulses, and has the same purposes. This is but natural and perhaps they are not far wrong. At all events why give cause for such hurtful suspicions? *Quid necesse est ut demus saecularibus obtrectandi locum*, asks St. Jerome? It is senseless to imagine that one does not expose his reputation. Does anyone think that the world would be so severe in judging those who permit themselves the familiarity of which we have spoken,

if it did not know from its own experience how dangerous this is, and if familiarity did not savor of impropriety in innumerable ways, if it had not given rise to the saddest scandals many and many a time, and if they who are or were given to it have not been seen to blush with confusion and regret sooner or later. No; that which the sturdiest of our Christian manhood have believed dangerous for their virtue and innocence cannot be indifferent for us that are weak. "I have seen the cedars of Lebanon fall," says Augustine, and from experience he could account adequately for the disaster. *Crede mihi: Episcopus sum, in Christo loquor, non mentior. Cedros Libani (magnos Ecclesiae), corruisse vidi, de quorum casu non magis metuebam quam Hieronymi et Ambrosii.* (S. AUG., *apud S. Bonav.*) Be diffident, then, of your strength. Familiarity, worldliness is the beginning of the "dry rot" process; it is only a matter of time till the tree falls; then all is plain as day. Follow the advice of holy priests, not of the merely good priests. Observe the rules of discipline such as they may be laid down for you. Avoid dealing with women especially in any way that is not priestly or sacramental: the cleric who resolutely shuns occa-

sions or familiarity wears a halo in the eyes of all. But he who is known to be without reserve or familiar is avoided by those whose acquaintance would do him good, and is sought after by such as he had better not known. This matter requires constant vigilance. In particular, be severe with your imagination and your affections, be they ever so secret or unlikely ever to be expressed in word or act. The priest should know human nature, and should realize that when mere human affection arises (whether on his part or not, or whether it be mutual or otherwise matters little) this much is certain: his usefulness to that soul is at an end. *Expedit magis timere quam male fidere, et utilius est ut infirmum se homo cognoscat et fortis existat quam ut fortis videri velit et infirmus emergat.* (S. CYPRIAN, *De Sing. Cleri.*)

PART III.
INSTRUCTIONS ON MAJOR ORDERS.
THE DIACONATE.

ARTICLE I.

**ON THE ORDINATION, THE POWERS, THE FUNCTIONS
OF THE DEACON.**

I.

WHAT IS DEACONSHIP AND HOW IT IS CONFERRED?

Deaconship is the Sacred Order nearest in dignity to the Priesthood. It confers the right to ascend to the altar with the priest, to assist him in the capacity of principal coöperator in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, to chant solemnly the Gospel and perform other functions of most sacred character, especially in relation to the Most Blessed Sacrament. It imparts also the grace needed to fulfil these offices well.

The ordination takes effect when the bishop, imposing hands on the head of the ordinand, says:

Accipe Spiritum Sanctum ad robur, ad resistendum diabolo et tentationibus ejus. In nomine Domini. The imposition of hands is the matter of the Sacrament and these words are the form. According to some theologians¹ there is a second matter and form in the acceptance of the book of the Gospels by the deacon from the hands of the bishop who, in proffering it says: *Accipe potestatem legendi Evangelium in ecclesia Dei, tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis. In nomine Domini.* Hence, this ceremony may not be omitted.

Besides all this, the deacons in the early days of the Church enjoyed still greater functions or privileges. They preached and baptized even as the priests. They gave communion to the faithful under the species of wine and, when no priest was to be had, under the species of bread. They aided and represented the bishop in practically all public or temporal affairs. They administered the temporal goods of the Church and distributed the revenues coming therefrom to those entitled to them: the clergy, the confessors of the faith, the virgins and the widows, the poor and the strangers. Today

¹ *Diaconatus per libri evangeliorum dationem confertur. EUG., IV, Decret ad Armen.*

they do not preach except by special permission, and in order to supply the lack of priests or to help in need; and they are not permitted to baptize solemnly or to give communion to the faithful, without a special delegation and a real necessity.

II.

THE DIACONATE IS A HIGH DIGNITY IN THE CHURCH.

From the beginning it has been esteemed such,¹ and with reason.

1. The Order of Deaconship is superior to all those we have thus far considered. Yet, they one and all are, as we have seen, deserving of the esteem and veneration of Christians.

¹ Cogitate magnopere ad quantum gradum Ecclesiæ ascenditis. Pontif. *Ad Diacon.* Abbas Theodorus cum factus esset Diaconus, non acquiescebat ministrare, sed huc atque illuc fugiebat. Et iterum senes adducebant eum, dicentes: Non derelinquas ministerium tuum. Dixit autem eis abbas Theodorus: Dimittite me et deprecari Deum; et, si ostenderit mihi quia debeo stare in loco ministerii hujus, faciam. Et ostensa est ei columna ignis. de terra usque ad cælum, et vox sonuit dicens: Si potes fieri sicut columna hæc, vade; ministra. Ille autem hæc audiendo, statuit apud se nullatenus ministrare. *Bibl. Pat. c. xvi. Cf. St. MARTIN., Vita.*

2. The Council of Trent has defined that there exists in the Church a holy hierarchy (that is to say, an order of persons subordinated one to another, so ordained for the government of the Church), that God Himself is the Author of this hierarchy, and that it is composed of bishops, priests and ministers. Now, it is certain that in the first rank of the ministers must be placed the deacons, since, after the priests, it is they who have the principal part or rôle in directing the faithful.

3. A very considerable number of Doctors doubt whether the preceding Orders impress a character on the soul and constitute a sacrament properly speaking; but as regards Deaconship none have questioned its Sacramental reality. That Deaconship is a Holy Order cannot be doubted, even though this may not be expressly affirmed in Holy Writ.

4. Deacons are, as it were, the Levites of the New Law. This name of *Levite* is most fittingly given to them, as the Pontifical observes; for they ought to be, as the word signifies, *assumpti*, detached from the world, and lifted up in their affections above the level of created things; and *additi*, aggregated, affiliated with the priests in the service of God at the

altar and in His temple. Their functions correspond to those of the levites of old. When the latter carried the Ark of the Covenant and the vessels of the Tabernacle, when they assisted in the immolation of the victims and in acts of worship, when they blessed the people on the part of God, they but pre-figured or were a prelude to the Deaconship of the New Law. They anticipated the deacons carrying the Holy Eucharist, distributing it to the faithful, assisting the bishops or the priests in the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice and in the administration of the sacraments, or invoking upon the people the blessings of Heaven through these words which are their official salutation: *Dominus vobiscum*.

And let us not forget that the deacons are superior to the levites no less by their excellence through grace than by the dignity of their offices, and that they ought, in like proportion, surpass them in merit and holiness.

III.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE DEACON ARE SUCH AS TO RECALL TO HIS MIND INSPIRING SCENES AND TO AWAKEN IN HIM HIGH PURPOSES.

1. They ought to remind him of Our Savior who was the first to do these self-same things, the preaching of the Gospel to the people or distributing the Holy Eucharist to His Apostles at the Last Supper. *Hoc officio usus est Dominus quando propriis manibus sacramenta dispensavit et quando Apostolos ad orationem invitavit, dicens: Vigilate et orate.*¹

2. They ought to beget in the soul noble and holy purposes: that of charity such as made Our Lord to give His Blood as the price of our redemption and the nourishment of our souls,² and of supernatural fortitude and readiness for suffering or martyrdom such as Jesus made to characterize the first deacons and now wishes to communicate to all others associated with them in Orders,³ that of gain-

¹ YVO CARNUT.

² *Propter nimiam caritatem qua dilexit nos.* EPH., II, 4.

³ *Si quis mihi ministraverit, me sequatur, et ubi ego sum, illic et minister meus erit.* JOHN, XII, 26. *Qui vicerit, dabo illi sedere mecum in throno meo, sicut et ego vici et sedeo in throno cum Patre meo.* APOC., III, 21.

ing the crown He reserves to those who will have borne the brunt of His conflict and come off with honor to His cause. The deacon may well ponder these things while going about the exercise of his ministry.

IV.

IS IT ALTOGETHER CERTAIN THAT THE DEACON BY ORDINATION RECEIVES THE SACRAMENT OF ORDERS?

That he does so receive the Sacrament is incontestable, even though the point be not defined by the Church. One cannot but recognize in the ordination of the first deacons all the requisites of a Sacrament:

1. There was a *sensible sign*, the imposition of hands by the bishop and the words accompanying; hence the matter and form of the Sacrament of the Order.

2. *Divine Institution*, for one sees the imposition of hands used without hesitation by the Apostles for the ordination of deacons the same as for the ordination of priests. Why this act, symbolic certainly, and done here by all, if Our Lord had not

taught them so to do and the meaning thereof? As regards the form, that undoubtedly could and may have varied, but even if at that first ordination was not said that which is said today: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*, at least they must have used words or expressions equivalent. *Et orantes imposuerunt eis manus*. They offered prayers, says Saint Luke.

3. *Efficacy of the rite to produce the grace it signifies*. The Council of Trent anathematizes whoever would pretend that the form of ordination actually in use is pronounced in vain, without effect; and St. Luke tells of the effects of grace in the first deacons ordained by the Apostles: *Stephanus autem, plenus gratia et fortitudine, faciebat signa et prodigia magna in populo, et non poterant resistere sapientiæ et spiritui qui loquebatur*. It is to no purpose to object, misusing the words of St. Jerome, that the only reason or intention in ordaining those first deacons was that they might serve the poor and preside over the common repasts. One should remember that the *Agapes* of the early Christians ended, as did the Last Supper, with the distribution of the Body and Blood of the Savior. It suffices only to read the tenth chapter of the First Corinthians to be con-

vinced of this; therein the Apostle reproaches certain of the faithful with having been lacking in respect for the Holy Eucharist: *Jam non est dominicam caenam manducare*. Who does not understand, besides, that if it had been merely a matter of ordinary public service, there would not have been required for the exercise thereof supernatural qualities quite as eminent as for the episcopate: *Considerate viros plenos Spiritu Sancto et sapientia*; and furthermore, the deacons would not have been entrusted so readily, one might say immediately, with the ministry of preaching the Gospel and of baptizing the catechumens.¹

V.

IN THE ORDINATION OF A DEACON THE BISHOP IM-
POSES HIS HAND ON THE HEAD OF THE ORDINAND.
WHAT DOES THIS SIGNIFY?

This rite expresses in the most sensible manner the gift, the transmission, the communication of

¹ Thus the deacons have always enjoyed a place in the hierarchy. They have always been looked upon as marked with an indelible character and that they can be ordained by bishops only. *Episcopum sequamini ut Christus Patrem, presbyterum ut Apostolos, Diaconos ut Dei mandatum*. ST. IGNAT., *Ad Smyrn.*

spiritual powers and of graces peculiar to the Order received¹ that the bishop makes to the ordinand. This is attested to by the accompanying words of the prelate: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*. It is to be remarked that at this moment he opens and extends but one hand, because he communicates in this ordination only a part of what he might give. In the ordination to the priesthood he will impart all, make no reserve, he will open and extend both hands at the same moment

By that extended hand also the bishop, representing God, seems to appropriate the ordinand and to take possession of him. The deacon kneeling before the altar is like to the victim that was offered in olden times in the temple, or is as the host prepared for the Eucharistic Sacrifice over which the priest extends his hand before consecrating it. God accepts him through His representative: He appropriates him to Himself, He consecrates him specially

¹ Obumbrante velut Deo teguntur. ST. ISID., *De Off. Episcopi* manus est communicativa donationis divini sacerdotii et imitatur omnipotentem et omnia operantem, protegentem et moderantem Dei dexteram. SIMEON THESS. *Biblioth. Pat.*, xxii, p. 776-778. Impositio manuum in sacramentis Ecclesiæ fit ad significandum aliquem copiosum gratiæ effectum. ST. TH., p. 3, q. 48, a. 4.

to His service and to His glory. The deacon then ought to regard himself as a victim belonging to the Lord, never in any way to belie this dependence and to expect, to look for all things from His good pleasure, trials as well as reward.

VI.

HOW CAN THE ARCHDEACON SAY THAT THE WHOLE CHURCH, *Ecclesia Catholica*, ASKS THAT HE IMPOSE HIS HAND SO UPON THE ORDINAND?

It is in consequence of the unity of the Church, which, making of her one moral person, makes her to have also the same interests and the same spirit everywhere and in everything. As Spouse of the Savior and as His only Spouse, she looks upon all Christians as her children and upon all the ministers of Jesus Christ as her own ministers. By the same title all are hers and all are equally dear to her. It is, then, just to say that wherever an ordination is desirable or necessary, the Church asks that it be given and that she is much concerned in that it be given.

More than this, the Church has other good reasons to wish that mention be made of her here, and that all be reminded of the concern she feels at every ordination. She expects or calculates that the bishop, reminded that he is the one who gives and ought to give ministers to the Catholic Church, will choose subjects who are truly catholic, who will serve her in their respective countries, not because she is of their country, but because she is of Jesus Christ and, through Him, of every country. She wishes that her ministers may have a large, catholic heart as had the Apostles and the Divine Master Himself, and if they must restrict or confine the field of their ministry, that they will never so limit their charity, that they will not be insensible to her needs in whatsoever quarter they be felt, and that they be able to say with the Apostle truthfully *Quis infirmatur et ego non infirmor? Quis scandalizatur et ego non uror?*¹

¹ II COR., XI, 29.

VII.

THE ENQUIRY MADE OF THE ARCHDEACON AND OF THE
FAITHFUL AS TO THE MERITS OF THE ORDINANDS.
WHAT DOES IT SIGNIFY?

It shows the excellence of the Order about to be received and the perfection required for its reception. Already, even before admitting the candidates to the preceding ordinations, the bishop should have informed himself as to their deportment and reassured himself as to their virtue. But at this moment when it is a question of conferring higher Orders, he feels the need of making a new enquiry and of obtaining still more certain guarantees. Wherefore, in this regard he seeks a testimony quite particular. *Nemini cito manus imposueris*, the Apostle warns him.¹ *Hi autem probentur simul, et sic ministrent nullum crimen habentes.*²

The bishop addresses his enquiry first to the archdeacon because it was he who, for a long time, was entrusted with the education of aspirants to the priesthood and was expected to know most about their deportment. The bishop next addresses his

¹ I TIM., v, 21.

² I TIM., III, 10.

query to the clergy and to the people; and although the faithful have been advised in their parish churches of their obligation to oppose the ordination of unworthy clerics, the prelate now recalls them to a sense of their duty and exhorts them not to fail what is required of them.

We shall hear another such appeal, more solemn still, before the ordination of priests. To be sure, the Church authorities scarcely expect to receive new information at this late hour; yet the enquiry has its *raison d'être*, and it cannot be said that it is without effect. It makes clear the obligation and the constant custom of bishops to take pains to obtain what information they can of the merits of the ordinands, and it recalls to these latter the need they have of the esteem of the faithful. *Oportet illum et testimonium habere bonum ab iis qui foris sunt, ut non in opprobrium incidat et in laqueum diaboli.*¹ Then, too, the accord of this practise with that of early times, of the first ages of Christianity evinces the faithful purpose of the Church to follow the instructions of her Founder and the examples of the Apostles.

¹ I TIM., III, 7.

VIII.

FROM THE BEGINNING WHAT WERE THE CONDITIONS
REQUIRED FOR PROMOTION TO DEACONSHIP?

The Book of the Acts indicates, for the most part, the principal requisites. In the account given by St. Luke of the ordination of the first deacons we read these words of the Apostles to the faithful: "Seek out seven men of acknowledged virtue." *Considerate viros boni testimonii septem, plenos Spiritu Sancto et sapientia.*¹ Each of these words contains much that is instructive.

Considerate: Consider; seek out. Two things are taught by this recommendation:

1. That no one of those ordained at that first ordination presented himself for promotion. All of them could say that they were chosen and that their elevation was not the doing of their will, but of divine disposition.²

2. That time was taken to reflect and that no subject was chosen who was not well known.

¹ ACTS, VI, 3.

² Non volentes neque currentes assumito, sed cunctantes, sed renuentes. Etiam coge illos et compelle intrare. In talibus ut opinor, requiescit Spiritus. ST. BERN., *De consid.*, IV, 4.

Viros. This word excludes, together with women and children, two sorts of persons:

1. Individuals who are sluggish and weak-hearted, who lack strength of character and enthusiastic fervor, who would be incapable of supporting the burden.

2. Men lacking maturity and discretion, and who are frivolous; for it is certain that the ordinary employments of the deacon, the distribution of ecclesiastical revenues, the care of the poor, the preaching of the Gospel, coöperation in the Divine Sacrifice, the administering of the Holy Eucharist, the control of the faithful require manly men, full of discernment, of tact and of wisdom.

Septem. The small number to which the calls are limited, shows that the needs of the Church or the prospect of advantage to her are the only reasons for the ordination of deacons, and that no one should be raised to the diaconate or to any Order, who has not the talent and the dispositions necessary for one to be truly of service to the Church.¹

¹ *Tales ad ministerium eligantur clerici, qui digne possint dominica tractare mysteria. Melius est enim paucos habere ministros, qui possint opus Dei bene exercere, quam multos inutiles qui onus grave ordinatori adducant. Dist. 23, Cap. Tales.*

Boni testimonii. For the edification of the people and the consolation of the faithful, it would be wrong to choose for the ministry of the Church other than men of serious and solid worth and of unquestioned reputation. The word of the Apostle amounts to this: *Hi autem probentur primum, et sic ministrent nullum crimen habentes.*¹

Plenos Spiritu Sancto. The merely natural endowments or qualifications, talents, science, good name, fortune would not suffice for ordination. In addition, in order to be fit for promotion to this Order, a measure of grace quite above the ordinary is needful. The Apostles do not ask for men who have *some* share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but subjects who are filled therewith. Where is such fulness of Spirit to be found if not in those generous souls who have mortified themselves and whose heart is not in things of this world?

Et sapientia. Wisdom implies intelligence and a love of divine truths. It supposes two things in the ordinands:

1. That they have successfully made the studies required by ecclesiastical law and that they are

¹ I TIM., III. 10.

actually in possession of knowledge necessary to instruct the faithful and to fulfil the offices of their Order.¹

2. That they have a heart and mind impressed with the truths of faith or, in other words, that their virtue and zeal be in proportion at least to the knowledge they have acquired.

May God deign to make every deacon feel and know the meaning of these words and may He give him a just appreciation of the dignity and of the sanctity of his Order!

IX.

IS IT IN THE ACTS ONLY THAT THE APOSTLES MAKE KNOWN THE CONDITIONS REQUIRED FOR DEACONSHIP?

We find these requirements set forth with even more precision and detail in the first Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy. The Apostle, after having told of the perfection to be looked for in those to

¹ *Necesse est ut qui ad officium praedicationis excubant a sacrae lectionis studio non recedant.* ST. GREG. M., *De cura past.*, II, 2.

be raised to the highest order, the episcopacy or the priesthood which have the care of souls, speaks of deacons. Here is his mind on the subject: *Diaconos esse oportet similiter pudicos, non bilingues, non multo vino deditos, non turpe lucrum sectantes, habentes mysterium fidei in conscientia pura. Hi autem probentur primum et sic ministrent nullum crimen habentes.*¹

1. *Oportet primum esse pudicos, σεμνους.* Chastity is the first virtue looked for in a candidate for Sacred Orders. The honor of God and the edification of our neighbor equally urge it. St. Paul wishes that this virtue adorn the deacon no less than the priest and the bishop: *similiter*. He seems even to desire something more than chastity: *pudicitiam*, a modesty unqualified, a virginal modesty, at once the token and the safeguard of innocence: *pudor constans et innocentiae puritas*, as the Pontifical says, *ut suae caritatis exemplo imitationem sanctam plebs acquirat.*²

¹ I TIM., III, 8-10.

² Et quia comministri et cooperatores estis corporis et sanguinis Domini, estote ab omni illecebra carnis alieni. Cogitate Beatum Stephanum merito præcipuæ castitatis ad officium istud electum. Estote ergo assumpti a carna-

2. *Non bilingues.* They should be without duplicity, without disguise or artifice, but as having no malice, no trickery, no unworthy purpose to dissimulate. In speech they should be simple, unaffected, without equivocation, open and straightforward. St. Bernard addresses this word of monition to those in Major Orders: *Consecrasti os tuum evangelio; talibus aperire nunc illicitum est, assuescere sacrilegum.*¹

3. *Non multo vino deditos.* These words are the natural sequel to *pudicos*. The Old Law forbade the use of wine to the children of Aaron during their term of service in the temple: *Vinum et omne quod inebriare potest non bibetis, quando intrabitis in tabernaculum testimonii.*² The Holy Spirit recommends moderation at least to the ministers of the New Law. *Non multo vino dediti*, as St. Paul here says, and as he will advise Timothy himself, sick as he was, later on: *Modico vino utere.*³

libus desideriis quæ militant adversus animam. Estote nitidi, puri, casti, sicut decet ministros Christi et dispensatores mysteriorum Dei. Pontif., *De conf. Diacon.*

¹ ST. BER., *De consid.*, I, II, 13.

² LEVIT., x, 9.

³ I TIM., v, 23.

4. *Non turpe lucrum sectantes.* After the love of the pleasures of the senses what is more out of keeping with the spirit and the dignity of a minister of God than cupidity or desire for money getting? St. Paul does not say *furtum* but *lucrum*. It is not enough to be merely honest; where one's treasure is there must one's whole heart be.

5. *Habentes mysterium fidei in conscientia pura.* The deacon is expected to be a man who, by his purity of heart and innocence of life, does honor to the religion of Christ of which he would be a minister, and in particular to the *mystery of faith*, that is, the Holy Eucharist, as is seen from the acceptation of this expression in the consecration of the Chalice, of which the deacon is the minister and the dispenser.

6. *Probentur primum.* Assurance of their virtue and of its worth from the way in which they have behaved as ministers in the lesser Orders: *Et sic ministrent, nullum crimen habentes.* If they be without reproach, and have given no cause for complaint or misgiving, let them be promoted to deaconship, that is, let them become ministers or servitors of the Church and of the altar of Christ: *Διάκονοι.*

Thus is seen how in the judgment of the Apostles

it was of real moment that this Order be conferred on those subjects only whose virtue and merit are known to be real and more than ordinary.

X.

HOW TO ARRIVE AT A PRUDENT JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER A YOUNG MAN HAS ALL THESE QUALITIES OR NOT.

To be sure, these can be possessed in various degrees; and be it said that there is no one to be found who has them in their perfection, or even in the degree that could be desired for the glory of God and the good of His Church. Yet, if one would make sure that he has enough for ordination, let him use the same means as for deciding his vocation to the clerical state and to the subdiaconate and to the priesthood. Let him take counsel with an enlightened, prudent and virtuous director; let him give to the director all details and indications needed to enable the latter to judge competently. Wisdom, the Spirit of God,¹ dictates that no man decide such a question of himself. One too often lacks the ex-

¹ ECCLI., xxxii, 24.

perience, the enlightenment and the disinterestedness to give a just verdict. If the director decide that one should go on for ordination, then one should prepare without delay, humbly and generously. The more perfect the dispositions with which the Sacrament is received the greater, of course, and more abundant will be the graces accruing to the ordinand. Furthermore, let no one neglect to invoke the Saints of the Diaconate, St. Stephen especially, whose prayers did so much for St. Paul.¹

XI.

WHAT ARE THE CEREMONIES TO BE OBSERVED BY THE DEACON IN CHANTING THE GOSPEL?

Several there are, the sense and meaning of which he should know and the spirit of which he ought to feel; but to see well the reasons for this, he must first grasp the underlying principle, that what is done at the altar is the memorial or the representation of what was done for our salvation when the Church was born, and that at the altar the priest imperson-

¹ *Si Stephanus non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non haberet.*
ST. AUG., *Serm. vi, de St. Steph.*

ates Our Lord, and the deacon the Apostles, as it were. This understood, let us proceed to the ceremonial.

After the celebrant has read the Gospel in a low voice at the corner of the altar, the deacon kneels in prayer at the middle, to ask, as did the Apostles in the cenacle, that the fervor of the Holy Spirit may produce in his soul an effect like to that worked by the coal of fire on the lips of Isaias; then, having received the Book of the Gospels within his hands, as the Apostles received the word of Christ into their hearts, and having asked of the priest the commission needed by a preacher,¹ he proceeds to chant it aloud in the hearing of all the faithful assembled. Upon the page of the Gospel the deacon makes the sign of the cross, and then signs himself in like manner thrice in token of his desire that God may make him to believe with all his mind, profess with his lips, and love with all his heart the truths which the Evangelists have transmitted to us.

The sign of the cross traced upon the book signifies that the doctrine of the Gospel is the same as

¹ *Mea doctrina non est mea, sed ejus qui misit me.* JOAN. VII, 16.

that of the cross; that of which the cross is the symbol and the knowledge of which has been merited for us by the crucifixion of the Savior.

The cross which the deacon makes upon his forehead is in token of his desire that the Father, through the cross of His Son, may engrave on his mind the truths He has been pleased to reveal.

The cross upon the lips is made to obtain of Our Lord the grace to profess and proclaim worthily His divine maxims. It is to this the Church seems to exhort the deacon in recommending that he chant the Gospel in a loud and clear voice, *alta et clara voce*, as the Apostles were required to announce it, *in lumine et super tecta*.¹

The last sign of the cross, made upon the breast, purposes to obtain of the Holy Ghost, through the merits of Christ crucified, a heartfelt love of the Gospel teaching, that is to say, the practice of humility, of poverty, and of mortification.

It is with the hand and in sight of all that the deacon makes these signs of the cross because his doings ought to be a corroboration of his teaching

¹ MATT., x, 27.

and he ought to preach as much, or rather more by example than by word.

After this he shows his veneration for the book of the Gospels by a profound inclination; then he incenses it three times, to the middle, to the right and to the left, as an earnest of his desire to spread abroad everywhere the knowledge and grateful odor of Jesus Christ.

Lastly, the preliminaries being done with, the deacon chants the Gospel. In singing it, he should endeavor to have something of the dispositions and sentiments of the Master, Whose organ he is, and he should ask of the Holy Ghost to so inspire all the faithful.¹

XII.

WHY IS THE GRACE PECULIAR TO DEACONSHIP THE GRACE OF FORTITUDE?²

Because of the difficulties to be met with in the ministry, and because firmness of purpose and constancy are needed for the right fulfilment of the

¹ Disce cor Dei in verbis Dei. ST. GREG. M., *In Ezech.*, Hom. x.

² Accipe Spiritum Sanctum ad robur. *Pontif.*

duties of the diaconate. It was the first of deacons who began the illustrious line of martyrs, and he has been followed by many others, St. Lawrence, St. Vincent, etc.

The deacons were not ordained, as the subdeacons, and the other inferior ministers, merely to assist at the altar and to help the Church by their prayers: they are entrusted with looking after her needs and with tending to her interests in external matters, and they are expected to defend her and help her to spread throughout the world.¹ *In officio levitico eligimini*, the bishop says to them. "You are expected to do for the Church what the Levites did for the Holy Ark amid the people of old. As they bore it upon their shoulders during the long march, as they cared for it and prepared for it suitably in the midst of the camp, as they defended it even in close conflict, you also must be ready to sustain the Church by your example and your speech, to defend her even at extraordinary risk, if occasion require, and to honor her by the degree of virtue becoming in a deacon; *Quam Ecclesiam, velut tabernaculum portare et munire debetis ornatu sancto, praedicatu divino*,

¹ In defensionem Evangelii positi. PHIL., I, 16.

exemplo perfecto."¹ Though she be not exposed in these days to the rigors of idolatrous emperors, she is nevertheless, quite as pitifully the butt of intrigue and petty persecution: *Quae semper in procinctu posita, incessabili pugna dimicat. Unde dicit Apostolus: Non est colluctatio adversus carnem et sanguinem, sed adversus principes et potestates, adversus rectores mundi tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae in coelestibus.*² Hence the Church is essentially militant. She has need to muster a sturdy militia; wherefore, what she desires most is to see, at the head of her defenders, ministers who are really devoted, ready for anything, full of enterprise, shirking nothing, and fearing no suffering that may be incurred in the defence of her interests, and who, like St. Paul, dread no danger save one; they dread failing in their trust, in their vocation, being found wanting in the accomplishment, in any degree, of the work of zeal and of upbuilding confided to their willing charge.³

¹ *Pontif.*

² Si non saeviunt homines, saevit diabolus; et si christiani facti sunt imperatores, numquid christianus diabolus factus est? ST. AUG., *In Psalm.*, xciii, 19. et *Pontif.*

³ Vado in Jerusalem, quae in ea ventura sunt mihi ignorans, nisi quod Spiritus sanctus per omnes civitates mihi

XIII.

JUST WHAT IS THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE AND WHY IS IT OF IMPORTANCE THAT A PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL HAVE IT?

1. Fortitude is not a virtue that consists in opposing violence to violence and in ill-considered combating all such as show themselves unfriendly towards us. It consists, rather, in not allowing ourselves to be shaken, or weakened in our good purposes; in accepting, in putting up with anything and everything sooner than offend God or wittingly thwart His good will. It is in this wise that the martyrs and confessors have evinced their fortitude and triumphed over the world. A deacon cannot too well think prayerfully upon their example and learn their spirit.¹

The deacon Stephen was not in the least unnerved
protestatur, dicens quoniam vincula et tribulationes Jerosolymis me manent. Sed nihil horum vereor, nec facio animam meam pretiosiores quam me, dummodo consummem cursum meum, et ministerium verbi quod accepi a Domino Jesu. Act., xx, 22-24.

¹ Exemplo sancti Laurentii provocamur ad martyrium, accendimur ad fidem, incalescimus ad devotionem. St. Aug. App. *Serm.* ccvi, de S. Laurent.

by the fury of the crowd, though they wrathfully cursed him as a blasphemer and hurried him outside the city to stone him. He only let them work their will upon him and in dying steadfastly confessed to his Master: *Video coelos apertos et Jesum stantem a dextris virtutis Dei.*¹ "Whither are you going, Father," asked St. Lawrence on seeing Pope Xystus led to his martyrdom? "Whither can you be going without your deacon? Never were you wont to go to the altar and offer the Blood of the Savior but that I offered It with you. Would you today shed your own blood and not have me at your side?"² The venerable pontiff consoled his devoted minister with the assurance that the day of his oblation was only deferred; and but a few days afterward the deacon saw the gridiron prepared for himself; it was his honor to die upon that bed of fire, praying for the conversion of Rome: *Segnior fuit ignis qui foris ussit quam qui intus accendit.*³ St. Vincent of Sar-

¹ ACTS, VII, 59.

² Cum altaris ministerio deputantur, in quo Christi passio sub sacramento representatur, admonentur esse parati ad proprii sanguinis effusionem pro Christo atque justitia. DION. CARTH., *De vit. eccles.*, 5.

³ ST. AUG., *Serm.*, CCCIV.

ragossa, grandson of a consul, showed himself no less constant in confessing Jesus Christ, and his example has been in like measure the source of graces and blessings: *Invictus Vincentii animus, Jesu Christi fide et spe munitus, omnia vicit*.¹ If we pass from the martyrs to the confessors, what evidences of fortitude and generosity we see in the lives of the Fathers and Pastors of the early days! St. Basil, unable to yield to the exactions of the Arian emperor, Valens, brought upon himself the threats of despoliation and of exile, and all he had to say in reply was: "When one happens to possess nothing confiscation is hardly to be dreaded; as for exile, well, Heaven is my fatherland and the emperor cannot banish me from that; while as to death, my body is so undone that a blow will let me free of your hands." Those who tried to intimidate Chrysostom had little better success: "He is afraid of nothing, save one thing," said the royal officers; "and that is sin." "Don't grieve over what befalls me," said he himself to his people. "The Church did not begin with me, nor will it end through my death." St. Ambrose, required to give over a church to

¹ *Breviar.*, 22 Jan., lect. 5.

heretics, resisted and went to guard it in person. "Have a care," said the envoy of the empress, "that I don't relieve you of your head." "May it please God to accord me that grace," answered the unperturbed Doctor. "If you think it well so to act as a eunuch, you will find that I know how to die as a bishop." But if one were to relate here all the instances of the generosity of ministers in those days, it would be a story without end.

2. Every virtue involves fortitude; for no one can practice a virtue or be virtuous except he put forth effort and restrain the instincts of nature. Without very considerable energy perfection will never be reached.¹

What, then, is to be expected of those who propose to bring the people to an understanding of what holiness is by means of their example; what ought they have of courage and fortitude? They undertake to combat not only their own passions, their personal inclinations, but those also of the multitude; they are believed to be desirous of lifting

¹ Qui observaret dicta hominum, nunquam aliquid boni faceret. Qui observat ventos, non seminat. ST. TH., *In Matth.*, II. Qui multum metuit homines, grande aliquid pro Deo nunquam conficiet. ST. IGNAT. LOY.

souls out of vice and of uplifting them to virtue. For this is the work of preachers; in other words, of those who give others to understand what God wills and what He expects.¹

If they are timid, if they mind being disparaged or sneered at, if threats can shake their purpose, if they hesitate or give up in the face of difficulties, they need not expect to face manfully the resentment of the affluent nor the ill-natured fault-finding or the disheartening irresponsiveness of the unthinking, the ignorant, and the uncouth. Instead of speaking out boldly, preaching in season and out of season, and with all the more boldness and insistence according as the opposition or the seeming futility of their ministry increases, they will either withdraw, as it were, into their shell and keep the truth they should speak out shut up in their own breasts, or else they will so temper and dilute it, so evade straight issues, or, Protestant preacher fashion, they will so alter and denature the wholesome truth that the sinful, who are to be

¹ *Ferveat in nobis zelus sancti Præcursoris, ferveat amor justitiæ, odium iniquitatis. Nemo vitia palpet, nemo dissimulet. Est enim consentire, silere cum arguere possis!* ST. BERN., *In verb.* Non licet.

roundly blamed and brought to task, will find in the preacher's words a fair apology of their conduct and even a justification of their disorderly doings. It will be quite otherwise, however, if the ministers of the Word of God have a stout heart and the courage of their convictions and of their state of life; if they but have some share in the firmness of the Prophets and in the vigorous determination that inspired the Apostles: obstacles will but stimulate their ardor.¹ They will say with the Apostle: "Nothing do I leave undone that may serve the interests of the Gospel. Nothing is there that I do not suffer in order that I may lead the chosen of the Savior to salvation. Woe is me if I be found wanting in the duty of preaching! I am hard pressed by tribulation, but my spirit is unfettered. We are persecuted, yet not undone; trampled upon, yet not crushed. That which really matters is that

¹ Non sumus sicut plurimi, adulterantes verbum Dei, sed ex sinceritate, sed sicut ex Deo, in Christo loquentes. II COR., II, 17. Non in sermone adulationis. I THESS., II, 5. Non idcirco nobis relinquenda est nobis ecclesiastica doctrina, quoniam conviciis insectamur, aut erroribus quætimur. Sacerdos Dei, evangelium tenens et Christi præcepta custodiens, occidi potest, vinci non potest. ST. CYP., *Epist.* III, ad Comm.

our ministry be not dishonored, and that we prove ourselves worthy ambassadors of God amidst all these trials: *Per gloriam et ignominiam, per infamiam et bonam famam, ut seductores et veraces; quasi morientes et ecce vivimus, quasi tristes semper autem gaudentes, tamquam nihil habentes et omnia possidentes.*¹

The deacon cannot overesteem this virtue of fortitude, of which the Holy Spirit is the author. Let him carefully develop this virtue by prayer, by thinking often of the early deacons, his models, and by application to the other virtues that are the foundation of this; faith, the fear of God, the hope of heaven, confidence in divine providence, and the charity of Christ. Let him not be afraid to heed its inspirations or to act upon them as occasion requires.

¹ I COR., ix, 21; II TIM., ii, 10; I COR., ix, 16; II, COR., vi, 6-9. Ego non solum capite privari et in mare projici, sed etiam infinitos cruciatus pro Christo meo sustinere paratus sum. ST. BASIL., *Episc. Amas.*, 26 apr.

XIV.

HOW CAN FAITH BE A SOURCE OF SUPERNATURAL
STRENGTH TO THE SOUL?

1. That fortitude of soul is given by faith, the writings of the Apostles leave no room for doubt. "It is by faith that we overcome the world," says St. John. It is through faith, according to St. Peter, that we resist the devil. Faith, declares St. Paul, has made the saints to conquer unbelieving peoples, to shut the ravenous jaws of lions, to extinguish the fierce ardor of flames, and in war to do deeds of prodigious valor. Faith is a strong protection against any assault; and the word of God, to which it makes us adhere, is a weapon that can foil the devil at his worst.¹

2. Faith does not work in all souls either in the same manner or with the same vigor. In pure and simple souls its action is, as it were, instinctive and spontaneous. It turns them from evil and prompts them to good almost without reflection. Thus has it been remarked and explained, that in times when

¹ Cf., ACTS. VII, 1, 8; I JOHN, v, 4; HEB., XI, 35-38; I PET., v, 9; EPH., v, 16, 17.

heresy and schism are abroad in the land, simple honest folk, uninstructed in the controversial points of religion, turn from false teachers at the very first encounter, as sheep turn and flee at the approach of the wolf. They will undergo torment, they will even give life itself for their beliefs, be they ever so incapable of arguing for, or of showing the truth of them. The grace of their baptism it is that enlightens them and inspires their conduct. However, with the ordinary Christian, faith, to have any such strength, must needs be reasoned, reflected upon, meditated prayerfully; for the every-day Christian must consider the reasons for the faith that is in him and see for himself the solidity of his position. If this be done, then there is no trial his faith will not give him the strength to withstand; no temptation it will not give the fortitude that means triumph: *Haec est victoria quae vincit mundum fides nostra.*² This is a fact of experience, witnessed to by conscience and repeating itself at every instant. A soul, for example, is solicited to sin through pleasure; its faith withholds it by reminding it that, as St. Paul has so well expressed it, to live to pleasure

² I JOHN, v, 4, 6.

is to die to God.¹ If tempted to cupidity, then its faith represents to it that greed is an idolatry and can lead to all manner of crimes.² If it be pride that tries to work upon the soul, faith recalls what the Scripture says; that God resists the proud and that what is of account in the eyes of the world is an abomination in His sight.³ Should resentment or a desire for retaliation arise in a wronged or outraged soul, faith brings up the thought that God pardons us only on the condition that we forgive others.⁴ It was to teach us how to put to profit these lessons of faith and to oppose them to the suggestions of the devil that Our Savior, in the desert, designedly opposed a maxim from Holy Scripture to each of the temptations of the demon. Pray the Holy Spirit to enable you to profit by this example, to ensure that you do so; to enliven your faith through the grace of fidelity to mental prayer and that of the faithful by frequent salutary instructions. *Non vocamur rationales, sed fideles.*⁵

¹ Quae in deliciis est, vivens mortua est. I TIM., v, 6.

² COL., III, 5; ECCLI., x, 9.

³ JAS., IV, 6; I PET., v, 5; AMOS, VI, 8; LUKE, XVI, 16.

⁴ MATT., VI, 14.

⁵ ST. AUG., *Serm.*, 36, *De verbis Domini*.

XV.

HOW IS IT THAT THE FAITHFUL FIND IN THE FEAR OF GOD, IN THE HOPE OF HEAVEN, IN THE EXPECTANCY OF DIVINE GRACE, AND IN CHARITY ABOVE ALL, A SOURCE OF SUPERNATURAL STRENGTH?

1. It is easy enough to conceive what effect the thought of eternal punishment will have on the mind and will of a man of faith. There is scarce anyone who will not prefer to undergo trivial hardships if thereby he will surely escape long and bitter sufferings. An operation, be it what it may, will readily be borne to ward off death or to bring effectual or even partial relief from an infirmity. And it is just this that the real Christian does when he imposes upon himself any mortification, when he accepts a sacrifice or an humiliation in order to fulfil his duty and remain faithful to his God. He simply has sense enough to submit to a passing, comparatively inconsiderable inconvenience or pain so that he may with certainty preclude the otherwise inevitable alternative of self-incurred anguish without end. Wherefore Our Savior is much concerned that His disciples never in their trials and sore straits lose

thought of the reality of hell: And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will shew you whom ye shall fear: fear ye him who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; Yea, I say to you, fear him.¹ Who fears God as he ought is, by reason of the same, above all other fear.

2. The same is to be said of hope.² If prizes of mean value suffice to induce men to compete against each other and to work with earnestness worthy of a better cause, why should not men of faith be urged to effort by the thought of the eternal good things God has pledged Himself to give those who worst the enemies of their souls and of His glory?³ You may note that Our Savior always reminds His disciples of His promises to them whenever He asks any self-denial of them. He repeats those promises to the Pastors of the Church, seven times even, and in the most magnificent terms, at the beginning of the Apocalypse: *Vincenti dabo edere de ligno vitæ.*

¹ LUKE, XII, 4, 5.

² *Si vis sustinere laborem, attende mercedem.* ST. AUG., *In Ps.*, LVI.

³ I COR., IX, 25.

Dabo manna absconditum et nomen novum
Qui vicerit, vestietur vestimentis albis, et non delebo
nomen ejus de libro vitae, et confitebor nomen ejus
*coram Patre meo, etc.*¹ St. Francis of Assisi was of the persuasion that it is enough for a religious to be convinced of and to reflect upon these promises to remain unshaken in his resolutions. "My brothers, said he to his companions, we have promised great things to Our Lord; but He has promised us things still greater. Let us be true to the former, and let us look forward hopefully to the latter. Each will be rewarded according to his merits. Pleasure here is shortlived; the suffering is little enough; the glory will be infinite."

3. An enlightened and generous soul has not the same need of thinking upon the future in order to help it over difficulties and to keep it firm and unshakable in its resolutions. It is enough that it think of the providence of God, of the care He takes, even in this life, of those who serve Him, of the aid He is wont to give them in their needs, and of the graces of all kinds He bestows even unasked. "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?"

¹ APOC., II, 7, 17, 36; III, 5, 12, 21, etc.

says the Psalmist. "If armies should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear."¹ "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me, says St. Paul. If the Lord is with us who shall be against us?"² "Here I am ready to enter into the kingdom of Japan, wrote St. Francis Xavier. My heart is full of confidence and I trust that, having God as guide, we shall triumph over all our enemies. What is there to be feared when one has in view nought but the glory of God, the honor of His Son, the good of His Church, and the salvation of souls? Were we in the midst, I do not say of savages or among barbarians, but with the very demons, what harm could their rage do us, and God not permit them?"

4. However, it is the love of God, pure and sovereign love, that gives to the soul greatest energy and inspires courage most. Love casts out fear, says St. John.³ It reaches beyond every human consideration. Does not this explain what we see on Pentecost day in the changed spirit of the Apostles? Scarcely had the Holy Spirit descended upon them,

¹ PS., XXVI, 1-3.

² PHIL., IV, 13.

³ I JOHN, IV, 18. Nothing can separate me from the love of God, ROM., VIII, 39.

hardly had He kindled their souls with tongues of fire than they felt themselves transformed and knew themselves to have become quite other men. They, till then such weaklings, pusillanimous and faint-hearted, were now found indued with supernatural strength and virtue; showing a firmness, a constancy, an intrepidity equal to any trial.¹ This, too, one may remark in St. Mary Magdalen. At the hour of the Passion her love brought her to the foot of the Savior's cross, taking no heed of dangers whatever. For sure, there was something to be feared from the malice of the Jews and from the rudeness of the executors. She gave this no thought. She followed after her Master, guided by the traces of His blood. She thought only of showing Him her compassion and her devotedness. She was there at His feet even to His last breath; nor did she go away until, with St. John, she had done for Him the last duties love could suggest. And what else is it that we so much admire in St. Stephen, the first of deacons and of martyrs? He beholds Jesus in heaven and henceforth thinks only of Him. He sees Him at the right of His Father, and the vision rav-

¹ LUKE, XXIV, 49; ACTS, IV, 8, 33.

ishes him. He gathers his fast ebbing strength to declare His divinity. Heedless of blows as well as of wrongs, he wants, he yearns for nothing but the glory of Jesus and to be reunited with Him: *Lapides torrentis illi dulces fuerunt; beatus homo cui coeli patebant.*¹ Stephen had no weapon save charity, yet with this he ever came off the victor. Through charity he withstood the onslaught of the Jews. Through charity he interceded for those in labor. Well grounded in charity, he overcame Paul as yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Christians. And through charity him, whom once he had as persecutor on earth, in heaven he now has as comrade and sharer of his joys and glories.²

¹ ACTS, VII, 59.

² ST. FULGENTIUS, *Sermon on St. Stephen.*

ARTICLE II.

ON PREACHING—THE OFFICIAL PRIVILEGE OR
FUNCTION OF THE DEACON.

XVI.

IS IT NOT TO PRIESTS AND TO BISHOPS, RATHER THAN
TO DEACONS, THAT THE PREACHING OF THE WORD
OF GOD PROPERLY BELONGS?

In truth, preaching is the honor and the especial duty of bishops and of priests, and this becomes a most rigorous duty when the care of souls is added to the dignity and character of Orders: *Praecipuum episcoporum munus est praedicare*, says the Council of Trent; and the Pontifical: *Sacerdotem oportet praedicare*; conformably to the very words of Our Lord to the Apostles: *Praedicate evangelium omni creaturae*.¹ Nevertheless deacons have always enjoyed a share in this honor and charge. They were ordained as assistants to the priests, to help out in this ministry of preaching as well as to be auxiliaries in the administration of Baptism and of the Eucha-

¹ Session v, *De Reform*, 2; MARK, XVI, 15; MATT., XXVIII, 19.

rist. Yet, they are not the ordinary ministers of the Word of God nor should they of themselves undertake to preach; it is for their ecclesiastical superiors to delegate them to fulfil this office.¹ Such was the practice of the Church from the very beginning, and a semblance of it is still to be found in mission countries where there is ever a dearth of preachers. We may remark, too, that St. Ambrose gives the name of evangelist to all deacons, quite as the early Christians spoke of St. Philip, and that the bishop now tells the ordinandi of their duty to help the Church thus: *Praedicatu divino, exemplo perfecto*.

The conclusion is that a deacon is under a veritable obligation to acquire both the knowledge and the qualities needed for preaching. The Council of Trent permits the elevation of no one to the priesthood who has not previously given satisfactory evidence that he possesses these both.² It is the very rule followed by Our Lord in regard to the Apostles. Before conferring on them the Priesthood, He had them a long time under His instruction, saw to it

¹ ST. THOM., p. 3, q. 61, a. 1, ad. 1, and ST. GREGORY, *De cura past.*, II, 4.

² Session XXIII, *De Reform*, 44.

that meanwhile they exercised themselves in preaching by imitating His method both in announcing His coming and in exhorting the people to prepare for it by doing penance; *Misit illos binos ante faciem suam in omnem civitatem et locum quo erat ipse venturus.*¹

XVII.

WHAT IS TO BE THOUGHT OF PREACHING IN COMPARISON WITH OTHER SACRED FUNCTIONS?

There are but few of equal excellence, of equal benefit to the Church, of equal worth to sacred ministers themselves.

1. To appreciate this excellence it would seem to be enough to reflect upon the fact that the Son of God was the first to take up this ministry and that He consecrated to it three whole years, in other words, His whole public ministry. He began, says St. Luke, by going to the synagogue of Nazareth, and there, taking up the Scriptures, He opened to this passage of Isaias and read: *Spiritus Domini super me: propter quod unxit me: evangelizare pauperibus misit me.*² Then, having folded the book, He declared that

¹ LUKE, x, 1.

² ISAIAS, lvi, 1.

He Himself is the one spoken of in the prophecy and that the oracle of Isaias was about to be accomplished. After that, says St. Matthew, He went about through the hamlets and towns preaching everywhere and announcing to all that the kingdom of God was already come upon them: *Et circuibat Jesus totam Galilaeam, docens in synagogis eorum et praedicans evangelium Dei.*¹ With such zeal did He give Himself to this ministry that often He would forego taking food, endure fatigue, spend the whole day at this work and then take from the time of rest at night the hours needed for prayer and intercourse with His Father.² There we have the example which He gave to His Apostles; and we know the commission He gave when about to leave them: *Sicut misit me Pater, et ego mitto vos. Euntes ergo, docete omnes gentes, docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis.*³

2. No function is really as essential to the prosperity of the Church. Preaching it was, of course, that spread the faith throughout the world, and

¹ MATT., IV, 23.

² JOHN, IV, 6, 31; MARK, VI, 31; LUKE, VI, 12.

³ MATT., XXVIII, 19.

preaching it is that continues to propagate and conserve it: *Fides ex auditu*, says the Apostle, *Quomodo credent ei quem non audierunt? Quomodo autem audient sine praedicante?*¹ It is true that the written Word of God could be studied, but the Holy Books are not always at the disposal of all and, furthermore, reading is not the true means, the effective means, the means chosen by God to lead the millions to the faith. To enlighten, to convert, and to sanctify men there is need, not of the cold bare truth, inert as it is and even hidden under signs and figures the sense of which does not readily appear, but the living truth, presented in winged words, capable of moving the heart, of striking the senses, and of reaching the understanding and commanding a hearing. After having incarnated, as it were, the spoken truth in His divine Person and made use of it as the means of His ministry all His life, the Master has willed that it pass to His representatives and that it continue to be announced from their lips, to be affirmed through their testimony, to be rendered sensible, effective, lovable and convincing by their evident conviction, charity, and zeal. Such,

¹ Rom., x, 14.

as a matter of fact, has been from the beginning, the preaching of the Gospel, the true preaching, the sovereign means, employed by God, says St. Paul, to save souls in bringing them into submission of faith: *Virtus Dei in salutem omni credenti.*¹ *Scriptura divina aedificat et lecta; sed multo plus prodest, si de litteris vertatur ad vocem. Magnam siquidem vim habet viva vox.*² Nothing, then, is of more importance in the Church, and nothing more essential.

3. Nor is there anything of more practical and solid advantage to those ministers entrusted with this charge, whether because this ministry in requiring considerable and attentive care and in imposing many sacrifices, makes them practise real virtue and gives occasion for the acquiring of much merit, or whether because one can do nothing excelling this, nothing more pleasing to God, more helpful to one's neighbor; for, to devote one's self to this ministry, after the example of Our Savior, is to combat vice and to propagate virtue. And again, it would seem impossible that a man occupied in bringing his fellows to an understanding of, and to a relish for the maxims

¹ ROM., 16.

² ST. JEROME, *In Gal.*, IV, 20.

of Christianity, to take off their hearts and affections from idle things and fix them upon things of eternity that are worth while, it seems impossible, does it not, that such a man should ever lose sight of the truths of faith in ordering his own doings, or not tend to and live for God with all the sincerity of his soul.

Hence it follows that a cleric cannot too highly esteem the office of preaching, nor have too much at heart the desire to acquit himself well of it. *Sollicite cura teipsum probabilem exhibere Deo, operarium inconfusibilem recte tractantem verbum veritatis.*¹ Many a soul, full of love for God yet confined to the cloister or to solitude, has envied priests this means of propagating the faith and of making it beloved. St. Theresa wrote to Father Louis de Granada congratulating him on the talents with which he was endowed for the instruction, conversion, and sanctification of souls. It was her persuasion that if there were but a goodly number of worthy preachers among the clergy the conversion of the world would be assured. "To be entrusted with such a ministry," said she, "there is nothing I would not give." Like-

¹ II TIM., IV, 15.

wise thought the foundress of the Ursulines in Canada, Mother Mary of the Incarnation: "From my childhood," said she, "having always heard that God speaks to men through the mouth of preachers, I have had such veneration for them that whenever I met one in the street I wanted to follow after him. I could have kissed the very traces of his feet, conceiving nothing greater or grander given to men than to announce the Word of God."¹

XVIII.

ARE ALL ECCLESIASTICS CAPABLE OF SUCH A MINISTRY?

Every cleric who has received the priestly character and is entrusted with the care of souls is held in conscience to give himself to this ministry. He has then, or may have, if he but will it, all that is needed for a worthy fulfilment of this duty. God asks the impossible of no one, and His grace always makes possible and even easy the doing of whatsoever He requires of one.² For how conceive such incapacity

¹ *Her autobiography*, cf. the meditations on preaching.

² The doctrine of a priest need be nothing than his life itself: *Etsi imperitus sermone, sed non scientia*. ST. PROSP., *De vita contempl.*, I, 23.

in a pastor of souls who has been truly called to the priesthood and legitimately ordained, duly instructed in the knowledge needful in his state, and animated with the spirit thereof from on high? There are those who seem to think that to preach the word of God one has need of unusual qualities and talents, of extraordinary knowledge, of power of imagination, literary erudition and proficiency, vocal culture, and what not. This is a mistake. We all know of worthy pastors who have but few, if any of these qualities or advantages, and yet who are very able leaders of their flocks in the way of Christian life, who instruct their people well, and make virtue lovable and loved among the souls confided to their care. Was there ever anyone more destitute of the qualities afore-mentioned than the good Curé of Ars, who, though so little of the orator, was no less remarkable and effective as preacher and catechist than as confessor? Certainly the abilities and gifts of an orator are of no inconsiderable worth in the ministry, and if one have them he can put them to very great profit; even he is expected to do so. But the point is this; that such qualities or talents are by no means necessary, and one would be altogether

wrong to conclude that because he lacks these he is thereby unfit for the ministry of preaching and hence should not accept the office.

What is really needed in order to preach effectively and to do good to souls through one's words is the heart of an apostle. Now an apostle is one whose main interest in life is priestly, who is preoccupied with the concerns of Jesus Christ, and is animated with His spirit. If one be such, he will be a good priest, a good pastor, and a good preacher. For such an one will have the feelings, the convictions, the virtues that he seeks to inspire in the faithful; while to communicate them to his flock he has but to speak that which is the secret and explanation of his own life, that is, he needs but to open his heart and soul to them and lay bare the workings of grace within him.

It has been said; Speech reveals the man. Can not one say with no less truth: Preaching reveals the priest; for, it is the inner life of the priest expressed, manifested, and communicated. It is the language that is spontaneous and personal, the natural expression of the soul. In order to speak of the things of God and to awaken the spirit of faith in

the souls of his fellow-men what else has a good priest to do but to consult his own faith and follow the inspiration of his heart? "From the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh."

The real difficulty of preaching, then, is not so much in the work of composition, or in the delivery of instructions and sermons; it is rather, and above all in the formation of the preacher himself, in the work of his sanctification, in the acquisition of the virtues with which his life should be filled, and animated. We shall do well to consider and emulate St. Paul in this regard.

XIX.

ON THE THINGS THAT ARE TO BE PREACHED.

Whatever is needful or useful to the faithful, all those things that will bring them to a Christian manner of life, the entire contents of the Gospels, everything that Holy Church proposes to our belief or as a rule of conduct: these form the object matter of preaching.

Praedica verbum, said St. Paul to his disciple.
Praedica Evangelium, said our Lord to the Apostles.

Now, to preach the Gospel is to preach Jesus Christ: and to preach Jesus Christ is to preach all that pertains to Him; His divinity, double nature, mysteries, Incarnation, nativity, life, miracles, passion, death, glorious state, the establishment of the Church; it is to teach the Church's dogmas, sacraments, Sacrifice, virtues, laws and counsels; it is to make known the work of the Redemption, our adoption as sons of God, the good fortune of belonging to the kingdom of the Savior; in a word, it is to preach Christianity, that is to say, a subject the most profound, the most sublime and vast, and, withal, the most touching and inspiring and appealing that mind can conceive.¹ And the preacher has therein matter inexhaustible for study and subjects for instructions without end.

Among the truths of our religion, those which are the more essential to salvation, which all must know and put into practise, are naturally the ones that it is of importance to preach and to teach and often to recall in sermons to the faithful. And quite of equal importance is it to preach well such truths as one's hearers may have especial need to know,

¹ JOHN, XVII, 3; I COR., I, 23. ST. AUG., *Enchi.*, 53.

whether because of their environment or whether because of false doctrine that is being diffused about them, or because of other baneful influences that must be thus neutralized.

Apropos of this, the following observations will commend themselves:

1. It is scarcely ever proper to treat of scientific questions in the pulpit, or to treat of things of the purely natural order, or of pure reason. As they are apart from Christianity as such, we are given no grace to treat of them. We must content ourselves with merely giving them such mention or consideration as may be warranted or needful by reason of some connection with the revealed truth.

2. One would make a mistake to choose as matter for ordinary or common instruction the more sublime truths of religion. Subjects of this sort are beyond the grasp or appreciation of the average mind, and are more apt to satisfy and exercise the intellect than lead to virtue.

3. One may always be certain of doing some good to the faithful in speaking to them of Our Savior, of His Incarnation, Passion, presence in the Eucharist, of His goodness, and of His purposes in our

regard: likewise, if one apply himself to teaching them to perform well the principal acts of a Christian life, Holy Communion, prayer, mental and vocal, confession, visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament, assistance at Holy Mass, the Way of the Cross, etc., and to exhorting them to attend well to the duties of their state of life, to avoid resolutely both sin and its occasions, and to seek to be some help to one's neighbor in the affair of his salvation

XX.

THE SORT OF HEARERS THAT A PREACHER MUST ADDRESS.

St. Paul considered himself beholden to all and therefore sought to adapt his preaching to the dispositions and minds of all those with whom he had dealings. Such ought to be the mind and purpose of every preacher; but, when under the necessity of accommodating one's preaching to the needs of one class only, that is, when obliged to make such a choice, then let the interests of God be consulted, preferring the greater number of hearers to the lesser, those in greater need or better disposed and more

docile to those of contrary dispositions or whose need of instruction or exhortation is not so urgent.

Our Lord declared that He was sent especially for the poor or to the poor¹ and for the most part of His time it was to the poor, the humble souls, to the simple dwellers in the villages and in country places that He addressed Himself. If He was seen to confer at times with the doctors in the Temple of Jerusalem, note that it was but rarely and at distant intervals. For the most part He was to be found in Galilee, with the fishermen on the shores of the lake of Tiberias, or in the fields with the laborers and the shepherds. After His example the preacher of His Word will prefer to instruct and exhort the little ones and the poor; he will be the friend and apostle of the children, the sick, and the unattractive and unpretending souls. As all souls are equally dear to God and since these just mentioned are the better disposed and of the greater number, would it not be ill-advised and hardly charitable to go out of one's way, quite aside, as it were, to devote one's attentions to certain individuals or class of individuals who, though

¹ Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. LUKE, IV, 18.
. Hi sunt thesauri Ecclesiae. ST. AMBROSE.

of more account in the eyes of the world, no doubt, and perhaps more enlightened, yet are too often, and even generally, overbearing, inconsiderate and presumptuous, small-minded and little inclined or likely to profit by any instruction, or to give themselves generously to Almighty God? Howsoever frivolous or unthinking children may be, or be the poor ever so ignorant, they are yet the ones who least often turn a deaf ear to the instructions of Heaven. If one but show them real affection and evince some zeal in their behalf, one will accomplish more through teaching of the catechism and familiar instruction than by carefully prepared discourses of the more solemn kind or by sermons that are characterized rather by their rhetoric and erudition or scholarship than by earnest piety and simple diction.

As a rule, however, the preacher does not choose his audience. Generally it is composed of all classes, conditions, ages, and of types of mind differing greatly. Naturally, then, the only thing to do is to strive so to speak as to be understood by all, to interest, and to be of help to all, *cum brevitae et facilitate sermonis*, according to the recommendation

of the Council of Trent. No long drawn out discourses that try the patience of the congregation, and of which the beginning is forgotten ere the end is reached. Avoid idle remarks, repetitions, and superfluous words, especially adjectives: also technical terms, theological or otherwise, new expressions or phrases that have no vogue except in a particular circle. Aim at clearness and simplicity; that is perfection. Then it will be seen and understood that he who speaks was formed in the school of the Divine Master; for the children themselves will be seen to understand and to learn. It is the learned and judicious especially who approve of such language, while the less educated, whose judgment is no less correct in this regard, are always ready and pleased to listen to instructions that are wholly within their comprehension and are prepared by one who keeps in mind their limitations.

For the rest, one should do his best for whatever congregation he may have to address, be it ever so small. When one speaks to a small gathering he is the better listened to; that is, if one really addresses himself to the souls before him, saying things that their needs suggest or that their dispositions are

likely to render fruitful; for it is only an interested listener that puts to profit what he hears. "It is the experience of some thirty years," says St. Francis de Sales, "that prompts me to speak thus: I have always done more good when preaching to small rather than to great assemblies."¹ Of course, he always preached as best he could and from the inspiration of his heart and made himself all things to all, whether at the court chapel or in a village church: "I am so much at my ease when preaching in this little parish church," he wrote, "and everything I have to say these good people grasp so well that they all but comment aloud upon what I tell them even while I speak."²

XXI.

THE INTENTION A PREACHER SHOULD HAVE.

It ill becomes one who utters the word of God to have any other intention in so doing than to procure the glory of God by making faith and charity to reign in the souls of men. St. Francis de Sales would have preachers say to themselves when entering the

¹ His letter on preaching.

² *Letter* xcv, Suppl.

pulpit, what Our Lord said of Himself when coming into this world: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*¹ To restore to them the life of grace which they have lost, or to increase it in such as have retained it, to bring both the one and the other class to the practice of a more and more perfect Christian life, all these aims are what the preacher should propose to himself and to the realization of these he ought to work with earnestness and perseverance.

This is so evident as a first principle that it were useless to dwell upon it further. Nevertheless it matters a great deal whether one reflect upon it and take pains that he be well grounded on it. All the fruit and merit of preaching depend upon the fidelity with which it is reduced to practice. For, it is only on this condition, that the intention of seeking God's glory be pure and living in the heart, the preacher will be without shortcoming or blame.

The merit of a preacher depends upon his intention, for God will recompense only the work that is done for His service. When one has preached for himself, in order to gain esteem, praise, etc., what

¹ JOHN, x, 10.

can one expect from Him? If one has obtained that for which he worked, then he has already received his reward: *Vani vanam*. Whereas, if one has failed therein, rather than make up to man the loss, ought not God to punish him for the misuse of the ministry entrusted to him? Without real merit, preaching will likewise be without fruit; for, to produce wholesome results, to turn, to get souls away from vice and bring them to a mind for virtue, the aid of grace is needed, and grace is not at the disposal of those who want it only in the interest of their selfishness and love of vanity. Besides, how will a preacher bring souls to God, if he have not God in view, or if he have the same desire for his own glory as for the glory of God? Lastly, remember that to reach the hearts of men and to change them, sincerity and conviction and fervor must characterize one's utterances. But this sincerity will always be lacking in the same measure that one's heart is divided, as one's intention is imperfect, according as one gives his attention to other things than the truths which one preaches or to the extent that one has other things at heart than the concerns of Christ and the triumph of His grace.

Faulty preaching is due in great part to the intention which one has. For, why is it that there is noticed a want of naturalness in the preacher's manner, tone and style; that they are bombastic, pretentious, labored, and affected; that he rants, recites, declaims or talks at the people instead of talking to his hearers? The trouble is that he has no real desire to convince, to persuade, to uplift, or to convert souls. His heart is not in his work; he but half gives himself to it; often he does not do even that much. Sermons may be preached on the need of saving one's soul, on the importance of growth in virtue, on the obligation of being humble, patient and charitable; but, if it seem that the preacher's heart is not in what he says, of what use are they? Why speak of hell, judgment, eternity, if the thought of these truths do not move us who preach these things? Men can speak unfeelingly of these things because they don't reflect, meditate upon them; because their minds are really taken up with other things. Expression, accent, gesture, and bearing are all given due consideration. They are careful to modulate the voice and to measure their periods. What they preach is not what they really

see or feel; it is too often only what they have read somewhere or what they think is the proper thing to say. Conventionality, platitudes, and stock phrases are their resource and only inspiration when composing. That they make little or no impression in the pulpit is not surprising. They can not be other than thought or found dry, unfeeling, affected, and wearying when listeners have no reason to believe in their sincerity. Their words carry no persuasion, nor does what they say create any interest. The preacher is thinking of himself and the hearers think only of him, too. The agreeable or disagreeable manner of preaching, the appearance of the preacher, his voice and language, these engross the congregation. Perhaps, knowing the man, his sermons on the great truths and mysteries may be something of a scandal, a stumbling block to them since they cannot but involuntarily contrast the man and his utterances.

Would to God, that all who are called to the ministry of preaching would learn to set aside all such silly and hurtful and even sinful preoccupations, to forget themselves that they may think only of God and of the souls in their presence, to give themselves

wholly to their subject and to their congregation, to work thoroughly to the very end with all their energy and strength: then they would be quite other men. Their words, their voice, their bearing, their very features, would, all at once, become animated with earnestness; then all would be consistent; all would be thorough and to the purpose. They would then speak from an apostle's heart and not only from a brain unschooled in the ways of charity. Then would they really minister the word of God and be the organs and instruments of the Holy Spirit. They would carry conviction to the minds of men and persuasion to their hearts; they would then lead, direct, minister to their flock. Their accent would ring true and the attention of men would be arrested; their words would carry weight, be given credence; and, when they should see fit to give advice, it would be listened to and acted upon. Or rather, and better still, listeners would scarcely give a thought to the preacher himself nor even to themselves, but will think only of Him whom the priest represents and of the truths vouchsafed them. Then one's discourses would be listened to and attended by the faithful and others for the sake of their souls' good,

because men will have come to understand that the priest is in the pulpit for no other purpose. Such is preaching in truth.

XXII.

AFTER THIS THE QUALITY MOST TO BE DESIRED IN A
PREACHER IS HOLINESS.

Assuredly nothing is to be compared with it or to be preferred to it; experience vouches for the truth of this. All ecclesiastics that have produced great things in the way of conversion and of sanctification, have been holy men; and we note too that the good they accomplished was in proportion to their holiness. Consult if you will, even cursorily, the story of the Church in ages past. Reflect a moment upon the Apostles and what they accomplished. Call to mind the more famous men of apostolic calibre, Saints Boniface, Norbert, Francis of Assisi, Dominic, Antony of Padua, Vincent Ferrer, Francis Regis, and Francis Xavier. And what of our own day? A mere glance about is enough to show that it is the same in our own very midst. The more priestly are the more effective. Those of little virtue do but

little good, are of but little service to souls. The mysterious wand that worked such wonders in the hand of Eliseus, had nought of virtue in the hand of Giezi. The explanation is easy.

1. The function of the preacher is as supernatural as is the salvation of the souls which he strives to ensure. But the means thereto are and must be, as we well know, like the end to be attained. So, too, the qualities required in the workman will be according to the work to be achieved. It is but a matter of sheer logic that priestly piety, holiness and supernatural merit have much more to do with effective preaching than natural talents, instruction or painstaking in the matter of style, bearing, voice, etc.

2. The one who really does or accomplishes the good in men's souls, converts and sanctifies them is the Holy Ghost the source of all grace: *Spiritus est qui vivificat*. The more, therefore, that a preacher is filled with the Spirit of God, the more will he do among men; that is, his work will be according to the measure in which he allows that Spirit to prompt, to direct, and to enter into his efforts. We scarcely need question who they are who have a care to keep

themselves under the influence of the Holy Ghost whose minds are always left open to His suggestions, and whose hearts are ever ready to answer to His urgings. Of course they are the holy priests, men of God, who have no ear open to selfish promptings of any sort, who rely upon nothing but their hope and trust in God and His divine grace, who call upon Him with all the earnestness of their soul, who hold themselves ever at the bidding of His good and adorable will and in unreserved dependence upon it. It is only natural, is it not, that the divine Spirit will make use of such preferably in the accomplishment of miracles of grace. Nor need we wonder that often a word from such a soul reaches deeper into our hearts than many a long and carefully worked out discourse. *For I will give you a tongue and wisdom that your adversaries all shall not be able to resist or gainsay.*¹ What is really affecting in great preachers is not so much what they say, for the same things uttered by others would touch or move no one; it is rather their holiness or, truer still, the Spirit of God that possesses their being and animates

¹ LUKE, XXI, 15.

it. *Do you seek proof of Christ that speaketh in me?* asked St. Paul.¹

3. According as a preacher is united in intention with God, he will find always that charity arouses him and faith enlightens his mind. The truer his virtue, the more is he impressed with the meaning of the truths of faith upon which he meditates in order to preach them, the more zeal will he have to impress others with them, the more telling and powerful will be his words. If he be a holy priest who preaches, then he cannot but preach as such; that is, as a man of God who speaks of God and knows whereof he speaks, and who speaks under impulse from the Holy Spirit. Everything about him, his voice, manner, and mannerisms even, will evince his sincerity and earnestness and zeal. That such an one should have weight with men, that he should be listened to, that his words should inspire confidence, that people should not find it irksome to be lectured and instructed by him, and, what is more, that they should be truly converted and guided by him, need not at all cause wonderment or

¹ II COR., XIII, 3.

comment. Were it otherwise, had he but mediocre virtue, or were scarcely priestly at all, then such phenomena would nonplus us all. To be sure, all can and must strive to purify their intention and to arouse their faith when about to go into the pulpit, but it is not easy in a moment to stir up in one's self the dispositions of a whole-souled servant of God. And there is nothing that begets more diffidence and regrettable indocility on the part of one's hearers, or is more readily and surely perceived by them than an unreal emotion or a pretended conviction.

4. In a word, when a preacher is also a worthy priest, it is known to all that his life is exemplary and that he teaches nothing that has not a place in his own life. His behavior reveals his conviction quite as well as his words or his features. He can say, and, in truth, whether he utter it or no, his whole life and being are ever saying to others: *Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi. Sancti estote, quoniam ego sanctus sum.*¹ This mute exhortation seconds and makes effective all the others. And oh, the difference, if men know that he leads a tepid,

¹ I COR., XI, I; LEVIT., XI, 44.

routine, all but aimless life; that with the voice of Jacob he has the hands of Esau! For, of the faithful few there are, says St. Francis de Sales, that are sturdy enough in virtue to put in practice the bidding of Our Savior, "*Do as they bid you, but not what they do.*"

To conclude. If you purpose to preach well and to do good by your ministry in the pulpit, then begin aright by changing your life, mending your ways, if need be, working in your heart and will that change which you say you intend and hope to work in others. Settle and ground your mind and heart upon God, thus making your life and your interests in life priestly and holy, that is, apart and aloof from preoccupations and matters that are not in some way priestly; making the concern of souls your "capital" interest, or, as St. Paul says: *Hoc sentite in vobis quod et in Jesu Christo*. This is the Sacred Heart living in the priest. Then you may preach and bid men do what you will and they will heed your voice: it will be to them as that of the Good Shepherd whom they know.

XXIII.

WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES MOST HELPFUL, OR EVEN MOST NEEDFUL IN PREACHING?

Holiness of course includes or comprises all; yet, five may well be spoken of as particularly necessary: Faith, Zeal, Humility, Prudence, and Meekness; which last is better expressed as a combination of mildness, firmness, patience and absence of resentment.

1. *Faith.* From it comes all apostolic endeavor. *Credidi, propter quod locutus sum.* Without doubt, all can say with the Apostle: *Et nos credimus, propter quod et loquimur.* One will scarcely preach if he have not the faith; yet to preach well, or rather, that one may not preach in vain, any sort of faith will not do. Faith must be living, giving warmth and light to one's own life; a faith like to that of Moses, seeming to see even while believing; a faith that overflows into the senses, and that makes one, as St. Paul says, *Sentire cum Christo*; a faith that makes all as real to man as if he beheld with the eye, and touched with hands, the things of God.¹

¹ HEBREWS, XI, 27.

When the Apostles told the world of Jesus Christ, when they spoke of His miracles, of His death and resurrection, it was with a compelling conviction; such that none could doubt as to their belief in the things whereof they spoke: *Vidimus et audivimus*, they said. *Vidimus oculis nostris et manus nostrae contrectaverunt. Non possumus quae vidimus et audivimus non loqui.*¹ To reach the heart and to convince the mind, the preacher must first have seen and felt also that of which he would tell others; he must have seen it in the light of God, thought upon it in prayer, and have been struck, impressed, and even changed by it, in such wise that his hearers may share in his experience through him, seeing it all, as it were, through his eyes: *Ex plenitudine contemplationis derivatur omnis praedicatio*, says St. Thomas.²

2. *Zeal* is the very soul of preaching. As preaching can rightly have no other purpose than the glory of God and the saving of men's souls, it ought, and in like wise, have no other prompting than charity. But zeal is charity, of the sovereign kind;

¹ I JOHN, I, 3; ACTS, IV, 20.

² 2a-2ae, q. 186, a. 6.

it is the love of God, active as fire and flame in the heart of the priest. Do you recall that the Spirit of God, designing to make of the Twelve fit, that is, zealous preachers of His Word, descended upon them in the form of tongues of fire: *Apparuerunt linguae tamquam ignis*. 'Twas hard upon that moment they began their ministry of teaching and preaching, says St. Luke, and from that out spoke ever under the inspiration of the Spirit of God: *Repleti sunt Spiritu Sancto et coeperunt loqui*.¹ Preaching was their lifework, and they had the consolation of seeing their faith shared by multitudes of the converted throughout the known world. Yet who are to take up and carry on their ministry, but they who share their zeal and to whom their spirit is imparted? *Qui non ardet, non incendit*. The eternal truths, coming from a breast aglow with the charity of Christ, make such an impression as never can be wrought by utterances, be they ever so sublime, coming from the lips only, or spoken with a langour that true zeal can never abide. They who would be the mouth-pieces of the Word of God,

¹ Acts, II, 3.

ought to be as ardent as the words they speak: *Facit ministros suos flammam ignis*.¹

3. The preacher then, is to be a man of zeal and of faith; yet, he must also be *humble*. It ill becomes the organ, the instrument, or the right hand of the Spirit to be anything else: *Numquid gloriatur securis contra eum qui secatur in ea?* It augurs badly for a priest who has not the measure of humility that becomes his office, if he is attracted to the pulpit through anything savoring of vanity, pretension, a desire to please, to gain prestige or the human satisfaction that may be gained by hearing the appreciative remarks of the faithful. He is sure to lose all merit before God; his ill-doing will close to him the source of grace; his labors will be sterile and of no avail to himself or to others. *Vae iis qui bene de Deo sentire et eloqui acceperunt, si convertantur ad inanem gloriam quod ad lucrum Dei acceperant erogandum, alta sapientes, humilibus non consentientes*.²

¹ HEBREWS, 1, 7. "Why are they not more numerous whose sermons warn off and withdraw soul from sin and disorder? Because preachers have overmuch of human prudence: nor does it disappear from among them as it did from among the Apostles in that wondrous great flame of divine love. ST. TERESA, *Her Life*.

² ST. BERNARD, *In Cant.*, xli, 6.

*Montes Gelboe, nec ros nec pluvia veniant super vos: neque sint agri primitiarum.*¹ Of necessity, such an one's utterances will be marred by many a defect, and the priest himself will very often be culpable therefor. His petty vanity is bound to appear in his discourses. He will not deign to be simple. Instead of trying to be clear and direct, he is almost certain to talk over the heads of the many who humbly and hungrily look for something from him that they can understand and take to heart; he will affect superiority, brilliancy, preaching in the "grand style." He will seek to be original, odd or new in his use and choice of words or in their pronunciation, singular in the ideas he gives utterance to, and objectionably unconventional in the subjects he chooses for sermons. Such as he always fear to be thought ordinary, common, or vulgar; hence he is apt to become stiff, unnatural, formal, stilted and prone to mannerisms. Or it may be even that his conceitedness will simply paralyze his talent; for vanity oft makes one timid, and timidity, if it do not keep one from speaking publicly altogether, it will hinder one from giving full play to his powers.

¹ III REG., I, 21.

And, in the chair of truth itself, he will refrain from saying many a wholesome word because his vanity has put the seal of human respect upon his lips. In the sermons of such a preacher there will hardly be anything of interest or of profit to God or man. Rather they will be displeasing to the faithful and doubly displeasing to God; for, if the love of honest hearts goes out readily to the priest who bears, in his language above all, the humility and charity of the Savior, they can, on the other hand feel only dislike and even resentment towards the pretentious one who, as they know, has no thought but for himself, who wants only to show himself off, to be in the limelight, to be noticed, and to be thought more of than he honestly knows he deserves. Of what use is it to speak, if one's listeners cannot follow the discourse. There is but one reason ever for speaking and that is to convey ideas to others; to be understood, says St. Augustine. *Qui ergo docet vitabit omnia verba quae non docent.*¹

4. *Humility* is but rarely unattended by *prudence*: who has the one, is like to possess the other. Imprudences come, for the most part, from presumption,

¹ ST. AUG., *De doct. christ.*, IV, 24.

excessive assurance, disregard for rule and counsels, inconsiderateness. A modicum of humility often preserves from these faults. Nowhere is imprudence more to be guarded against than in the pulpit, for in preaching it is easy thus to slip; while the consequences can as easily be more regrettable still. One needs to take forethought, and to be self-possessed in the pulpit, lest he say things ill-considered, or offend against propriety. One needs to be careful, also, to say nothing that will be misconstrued. It is when going into the pulpit, more, perhaps, than when approaching the altar, that one should earnestly pray: *Pone, Domine, custodiam ori meo.*¹ St. Charles advises young priests to leave the speaking of abuses to their elders. So, too, with other questions, which best come from those having experience together with authority. Imprudence in the pulpit can do much harm in a parish; and it can happen that even one indiscreet utterance will discredit an ecclesiastic and his ministry.

5. But the one who would preach to the faithful must be more than all this. Goodness of heart and *meekness* must characterize him. The latter is

¹ PSALMS, CXL, 3.

but the manifestation of the former. In sermons they are most remarkable. People tell of a priest who speaks with unction; they mean that there is piety in the tone, that there is firmness yet moderation; nothing unmeasured or unkind. The priest's words may be of correction or even of rebuke, but they are never harsh nor do they hurt the feelings or embitter the minds of those to whom they are directed. Whatever he has to say, he can say out without mincing words but also without overdoing. His sermons are always attractive because he inspires confidence and docility in all that hear him. The faithful like especially moral discourses and are ready to be told of their shortcomings by the priest; they expect to be corrected by him and think it strange if they hear no word from the altar on Christian right-living, or if disorders among them are not signalized and rebuked, and that firmly. But there is a way of doing it. The priest that has trained himself to charity and meekness knows that way. Remember, too, that the faithful resent its being done any other way, for they know that it does them harm to be reprimanded immoderately. Was it not that accent of charity, called meekness,

which, above all, brought the multitudes again and again to the feet of the Divine Master? Was it not this that gathered around Him the poor and the little ones? And what else was it that made, or helped Francis of Sales undo the determination of men who were bitterly set against him, and made for him of his listeners as many friends? He told priests to preach thus. "I always prefer the sort of preaching that has something of kindness and of love of men in it, rather than that which is full of indignation for their faults and failings," said he. There was neither softness, nor pampering, nor flattery in what he had to say; nor was he a man of excessive sensitiveness, that he could not bear to reprimand. He knew how to reprehend and to rebuke and to blame; he did it as a father worthy of the name: not forgetting why he did it, and reminding himself that he was not speaking to relieve, or to give vent to his own indignation or displeasure. That is a form of selfishness. Reproaches are prompted by charity, they come from a desire to turn others to better ways, to do them thus a real kindness; hence, that concern, that love for those we correct, to whom and of whom we complain, should

appear in our words and manner. Fénelon urged priests to be kindly, to be tender of the feelings of others. "You will help or save no one, if you know only how to give commands and to scold." You may think with profit upon these words. The priest who has no piety, who is without kindness in his nature, who is not careful to take thought for others, who has not learned to be considerate and forbearing, will at length become a common scold. His utterances from the pulpit will not be sermons or discourses, neither will they be instructive or corrective, or in any way helpful: they will be simply a continual nagging and fault-finding. The priest himself will become, or will have become a cynic; soured, and selfish; his talking to the people will have no good effect. The better disposed will be disgusted, the indifferent will be bored, and the lax and reprehensible, at whom chiefly it is all aimed, will make jest of it all. It concerns us to know, too, that thoughtful and experienced priests say that in our day the faithful are more sensitive and critical; that, not having the rugged faith of the older generations, they are not likely to overlook such things in the priest.

In conclusion, we give here some observations that it behooves one to bear in mind. Be careful not impute wrong-doings to your hearers, unless positive of their being blame-worthy. Seek to encourage good dispositions, wherever and whenever you find them, particularly when they are seen to be weak. The weaker, the more they are to be fostered. Speak kindly and pityingly of sinners. Never seem to be as one who is vindicated or gratified at the realization of miseries or misfortunes that you may have foretold or warned against; nor ever appear to be satisfied, with the air of "I told you so," when chastisement of God has come to a delinquent. Intercede rather in his behalf, after the example of Moses. *Work in meekness of wisdom. For if you have bitter zeal, this is not wisdom, descending from above; but earthly, sensual, devilish.*¹ You have not only to instruct and to admonish; you have to save and to gain souls. *Deus charitas est;* be you, then, sympathetic, kind, and compassionate. *Expectat ut misereatur nostri.*²

¹ JAMES, III, 14-15.

² I JOHN, IV, 16; ISAIAH, XXX, 18.

XXIV.

SCIENCE, ALSO, IS NEEDED FOR THE MINISTRY OF
PREACHING.

It is to a certain extent indispensable. One will never teach anything that he does not already know well. But preaching the Gospel is teaching. To instruct others in Christian doctrine, that is, to do it as it needs to be done, if done at all, such as the priest is expected to do it, means a study and a knowledge of Christianity, its mysteries, its dogmas, its precepts, its virtues, its rule of life and its sacraments, and all other means of sanctification. Unless these be sufficiently understood by the priest he is unfit for the ministry of preaching.

1. According to St. Thomas, whoever wishes to teach or preach to the faithful, must be qualified to teach the following: The things to be believed, or the articles of our creed, without the knowledge of which one cannot be saved, and to which one must adhere explicitly. The things to be done, or not done; the commandments of God and of the Church. That which one must avoid; sin, its nature, kinds

and occasions. The things to be hoped for; the future life and the good things it has in store. The thing most to be dreaded; the consequence of sin, hell, its torments and its eternity.

It is needless to insist that one's knowledge on these matters ought to be exact, precise, as well as adequate. For, as said above, one will teach according to his knowledge; nothing, if ignorant; badly, if poorly informed. And it is worse to have taught a wrong notion of Christianity than to have left men in their ignorance. Wherefore St. Paul, when speaking of preaching, said to Titus, that it should be according to true doctrine.¹

No one can pretend to expound the things, all mentioned above, who has not made serious studies. Much less can anyone give solid and convincing reasons therefor, if he has not mastered, in a fair way, the theological sciences. The most simple truths touch upon, are allied with, and involve an infinity of others; to treat of one mystery, one must understand Christianity itself; likewise, to go into the nature and essence of any one virtue requires a

¹ TITUS, II, 7-8.

grasp of all the doctrine relative to Christian morality and asceticism and the supernatural order.

2. Besides the science that one must have acquired for the fulfillment of pastoral duty, a good priest has at heart to acquire further knowledge and information, such as may help him in doing greater good to souls. It is a broad field that is open to such a student; a field that knows no limit, for Christianity, its dogma and its moral, is for the rarest mind a vein inexhaustible. Study and research make for clear, solid, and wholesome instruction. The discourses of a learned, well-informed priest are substantial, luminous, and forceful; like the man's mind and character. Each word is expressive and progressive, adding some idea to what has just been said; and each new idea reveals or suggests a host of others. The allusions, the vistas of thought opened up, the memories evoked are without number. Compared to these, the discourses of a brilliant and superficial preacher seem idle and empty and trite. The latter may be agreeable, but they have no depth; they are ordinary, they lack the sap and savor that belong to Christianity alone: they glitter with generalities that cost no thought, abound in

platitudes and banalities, idle descriptions, rhetoric and inconsequential observations of all kinds. It will be painfully evident to the congregation that such a one does not speak to them out of the abundance of his mind and heart, eager to communicate to them the ideas and sentiments which fill his thoughts and occupy his life; but that he is quite lost for ideas, that he is searching for words, or that he says whatever comes to his mind, in whatever words come readiest to his lips: it will be plain that he is embarrassed and that he talks on lest he should lose the thread of his discourse. He won't take much interest in what he has to say, neither will others. And, knowing but little whereof he speaks, his hearers will carry away less. His deficiency in learning will be all the more apparent as he is without humility, or as he affects language and style that are stilted, pompous, and otherwise lacking in simplicity and directness and naturalness.

Again, it is not only the matter to be preached that a priest must understand well; but also, he should know well his audience, their ideas, needs, mentality, ways, life, and attitude towards religion, etc.; hence he should study life and conditions in

his parish, in the country, and even in the world of his day. The influence and authority of a priest is often greatly increased by his acquaintance with those with whom he has to deal, and his intimate knowledge and appreciation of them and their concerns. It were well that they be able to say of him what was said of Our Savior: *Non opus est ut quis testimonium perhibeat de homine; ipse scit quid est in homine.*¹ This knowledge of men and things supposes the habit and faculty of observation, and a continual application of them to men and to things.

One other sort of knowledge there is, which, though too little sought after, is quite as desirable as any so far mentioned: it is ascetic theology; an acquaintance with the ways of God with men; an understanding of the soul's growth in piety and holiness; an insight into the supernatural life and the workings of the Sanctifier in the hearts of His chosen ones. The earnest, pious priest acquires this chiefly by his own personal and practical experience, by the habits of prayer and recollection, by the fidelity with which he attends to his duties of piety: to his examen, spiritual reading, and other such exercises of devo-

¹ JOHN, II, 25.

tion; but this same knowledge is generally wanting to those whose life, though regular and, to all appearance, without reproach, is taken up with external activity.

XXV.

THE WAY TO ACQUIRE THE KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY FOR THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING.

1. The first means of all is, naturally, to follow a full course in dogmatic and moral theology. "Give yourself assiduously to scholastic theology, for it is indispensable to anyone who would have an accurate knowledge of the Scriptures," was the advice of St. Charles.¹ One who has followed attentively such a course possesses Christian doctrine well enough not to make any notable mistake in teaching others. He is able to expose dogmatic matters with clearness and precision, and can substantiate his statements as he goes along. Whereas, it is just as certain that, on the contrary, if a theological course has not been made fully and well, there will be many a question upon which the delinquent will do wrong to venture; for there are things in plenty that must be preached,

¹ *Letter to Baltor.*

yet that can only with difficulty and care be presented without inexactitude, and a host of others against which difficulties from the Fathers and from the Scriptures are urged which the half-informed or uninitiated will be incapable of answering.

However, the learning acquired in the seminary is necessarily incomplete and, if study be not kept up, much of it will, even at that, be lost. In the ministry one must still keep to his books, for memory needs to be refreshed, knowledge already acquired needs to be developed. *Permane in iis quae didicisti.*¹ A review of the treatises seen in the seminary simply must be a matter of duty, from time to time, especially in moral theology and in such dogmatic questions as one may have occasion to preach upon. This may be done by the reading of controversial works, apologetic writings, reviews, and conferences, as well as by the study of theologies and casuistic publications. The elementary notions stick in the mind fairly well, and reading of this sort supplies in great part the obligation to keep up one's consultation of theologies. Bear in mind, too, that ignorance, forgetfulness, and inadvertence are excusable

¹ II Tm., III, 4.

only in so far as a reasonable and prudent effort is made to preclude against them. The "morali adhibita diligentia" spoken of by the theologians is relative: each must decide the measure for himself.

2. It is important to have studied also the Scriptures, especially the New Testament: *Fons sapientiae verbum Domini in excelsis*.¹ Because the preacher must speak in the name of God, as His representative and the mouthpiece of His Spirit, he ought, then, to know well His Word and should be filled with His maxims. *Comede volumen et vadens loquere filiis Israel*, said God to the prophet Ezechiel. Besides this, the priest should try to make the language of the sacred writers his own, and to learn their accent. Childhood has its own peculiar language or tongue, and there is another that belongs to old age; but all words lose their beauty when they do not beseem the mouth that utters them. There is, too, a language peculiar to men who are inspired endowed with authority from on high. This last is the language of the sacred authors. It is also the one that belongs in the mouths of the ministers of God; they acquire it; it comes to them; they make it their own, quite

¹ ECCL., I, 5.

as they imbibe their doctrine; by study, by application of minds and hearts to the fragments of their utterances that God has vouchsafed to preserve unto us, by pondering these in our hearts that we may be penetrated with them. *Amplectentem eum qui secundum doctrinam est, fidelem sermonem.*¹ In this way did the great and holy doctors form themselves, they who, real teachers all, have done great, good and abiding service to our holy Church: Chrysostom, Basil, Augustine, and Pope Gregory. They were disciples of the Holy Spirit and of those who had so well spoken in His stead, and in their turn became His instruments. They studied above all, the Master, the Word made Flesh, Our Lord Jesus Christ. In His school it was that their minds took in that learning and knowledge, pure and sublime: that power of words, grave, simple, touching, that open the mind's eye and feel to the heart, that humble and console, that subdue and disarm, convert and give heart, that hold equally fast under the seeing presence of God both him that speaks and them that hear. This is the language that

¹ ST. AUG., *De doctr. christ.*, IV; TIT., I, 9.

befits the preacher; that may be his if he will have it; the only one that works good to men's souls.

XXVI.

CANNOT TALENT AND LEARNING MAKE UP FOR THE
WANT OF HOLINESS IN THE PREACHER?

1. If in one there be nothing holy or priestly but the character of Orders, that is, if he have no appreciable degree of merit or virtue, then, these things simply cannot supply. There is no compensation for this deficiency. He that has not the grace of God, says St. Paul, is nothing. "If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not charity, I am nothing." If a man be not persuaded himself, he will hardly try to persuade others. Of course, one can dissimulate and feign sentiments that one has not; but there is an accent of sincerity that is not easily assumed, and again, a priest is fairly well known by his parishioners and they know what they

can expect from him, and on what subjects he is qualified to speak. When the priest ventures upon anything beyond that range, they feel that there is inconsistency; they lose their respect for one who can preach a doctrine that he must know in his heart is a reproach to his own life. To see an ambitious, a selfish, a worldly, a sensual, or a proud man in the pulpit preaching on Christian virtues, is a scandal; and the greater so according as the man has talent and learning. The thoughts in the minds of the faithful are the same as those of Isaac, Jerome, Gregory, and Aquinas: *the voice indeed of Jacob, yet the hands of Esau.*¹ *Doctores humilitatis duces superbiae.*² *Non confundant opera tua sermonem tuum, ne forte cum in ecclesia loqueris, tacitus quilibet respondeat: Cur ergo haec quae tu dicis, ipse non facis.*³ *Cujus vita despicitur, restat ut ejus praedicatio contemnatur.* Or what God Almighty Himself says to such: *Quare tu enarras justitias meas et assumis testamentum meum per os tuum? Tu vero odisti disciplinam et projecisti sermones meos retrorsum.*⁴ The faithful let the preacher rant on, but when they

¹ GEN., XXVIII.² Hom. in Job.³ Epist. ad Nepot., LII.⁴ PS., XLIX, 16.

leave the church, they do as before; that is, they do as he does, not as he bids them. But the end is not yet. Knowing one such priest, they cannot but have some furtive notion that he is not alone of his kind; that, though there be exceptions, he is the type; that the generality of preachers are like himself; that with the majority it is all a matter of rhetoric, of conventionality; that anyone would make a mistake to believe in their good faith, or that they mean all they say; that they are not to be taken at their word, nor should anybody let anything they may say give him cause for concern or practical inconvenience. Should this seem overstated, then just reflect a moment on the want of readiness on the part of the human will to take correction and to effectively amend, and, on the other hand, that unfailing willingness or tendency to relieve or salve one's conscience and escape the annoyance of self reproach, by listening to and believing suggestions of the insincerity and disingenuousness of others, especially of those whose office or rôle in one's regard is that of mentor or monitor.

2. If the preacher be one who at least keeps ever in the grace of God, and have piety and virtue that can be considered sufficient, though mediocre, all this unfortunate turn of affairs is less to be feared. For even such an one can do good work in his ministry and put to profit what he has learned from books or experience. He will never be really capable of exhorting souls to strive for perfection, much less of leading them to an approach to it: yet, he will be able really to teach and to instruct. Souls will listen to him with profit, for teaching is a work of the mind and intellect, rather than of the heart; wherefore, he that can learn or has learned for himself, who has taken the trouble to enlighten himself, is qualified and capable to teach others. Thus it can be that superiority of mental qualities can in a measure make up for mediocrity of virtue.

3. But, on the other hand, a degree of holiness above the ordinary will more easily make up for inferiority of talent; and, with a measure of learning or of knowledge of the more common sort, it will work more good to souls than an extraordinary amount of learning joined with mediocre piety. A holy pastor, whose piety makes him to be a true

shepherd, will be the more readily seconded in his endeavors by the power of Heaven; he will reach hearts quicker and more surely; he will produce impressions more wholesome and deeper than a learned theologian who, though exact and judicious, is yet without zeal and unction, and is cold and unfeeling. One speaks of truths that one has come to love and practise quite otherwise than of those one has come to know only through scientific study, be they ever so well learned. St. Francis of Sales says that a preacher needs to be a well instructed man; but that this is not the same as saying that a pastor can never fulfil his duty in the pulpit unless he be a man of eminent learning. St. Francis of Assisi was not a learned man; he was a rare preacher, nevertheless. Learning never is wanting to a man who does not seek to appear more learned than he is or who does not attempt to speak on things beyond his knowledge. Why speak much of difficult subjects and subtle questions when there are subjects in plenty that it is more to our purpose to preach. The preaching of Jonas, it would seem, was scarce other than an unceasing repetition of the words: "Yet forty days and Ninive will be de-

stroyed!" Words of salvation are always good tidings, even if they be repeated a hundred times.¹ *Minus de scientia, plus de virtute*, was the oft-repeated utterance of St. Ignatius.

4. All things considered, however, it would be the more perfect thing to possess a thorough-going knowledge of Christian truths and a proportionate degree of holiness. These two qualities sustain one another and each makes the other truly and thoroughly efficient. Holiness, or sanctity, because of the charity whence it proceeds, is the very soul of the preacher. It puts into play all his faculties, his intelligence, imagination, and his various senses. In applying them to God, in holding them under His influence and action, it ennobles them, supernaturalizes them, and, in some sense, makes them divine. While learning, joined with sanctity and put at the service of zeal, is like the talent doubled in its worth, and increased in fruit tenfold. Having only virtue, a priest could not treat rightly of the most simple subjects. He would scarcely be able to interest, or hold the attention of the least instructed, intelligent, or exacting. And there are Christian truths and

¹ ST. FRANC. DE SALES, *Letter to the Arch. of Bourges*.

maxims that he could not expose or inculcate at all. But talent, learning, and piety joined in the priest make him respected and listened to, and his instructions all that they should be. He will simply radiate the enlightenment and warmth that fill his own life and soul. The fervent will profit by his erudition and the tepid by his fervor. As the wholesome sunshine brings with it light and warmth, so is such a priest to all the Church a giver of the knowledge of God and of a love of eternal good things; he brings forth everywhere fruits of grace and salvation: *A summo coelo egressio ejus, nec est qui se abscondat a calore ejus.*¹

XXVII.

DOES PREACHING REQUIRE LONG PREPARATION?

It is needful to distinguish in answering this question.

1. One should never attempt to preach, not even to give a simple allocution, without first giving some moments to recollection and to some sort of preparation. It is always needful to determine well what it is that one wishes to say, of what one seeks to

¹ Ps., XVIII, 7.

convince his hearers, what it is one wants to impart, to what one hopes to persuade one's listeners, and to see for one's self the reasons that may be adduced and the order in which they will best be presented, and, therefore, to sketch a little plan of one's discourse beforehand. One never will speak off-hand without regretting it later and, too late; for, it will presently appear how much more neatly, urgently, fully, and cogently one would have spoken had one but taken time to reflect and to prepare, at least in so far as circumstances would have allowed. But what we have now to say will be interpreted according as the preparation can be made in a few moments, mentally by merely revolving in the mind a few thoughts, or as it may require careful work, and to be done at one's leisure and by writing.

2. Evidently, the time necessary for the preparation and manner in which it should be made depends on a variety of conditions; on the nature of the subject, the importance that attaches to the discourse, the audience, and, above all, upon the dispositions and limitations of the preacher.

If it be only a word of edification, a word of counsel, or a brief allocution to be made to hearers

already well disposed, then, the preparation may well be short; but, of course, it must be quite otherwise should one wish or be expected to treat at length and deeply of a subject of considerable importance, or if one be called upon to address a gathering that is, in a way, peculiar, exacting, or biassed.

In such cases, the average speaker will take considerable time to prepare. He will study his subject carefully; that is, first of all, make clear to himself what it is that he has to treat of and the precise aspect of the question that is to be his concern; he will then ponder well upon it, read if necessary and, according as he finds it then needful or advisable, take his notes, questioning himself always as to their pertinence or relevancy to his subject, and finally compose at his leisure, committing to memory all the while. They who are more gifted or more experienced may not dispense themselves from similar preparation, although they need not bestow upon it the same time and care. They will, one and all, do best to compose their discourses, learn them by heart, and, in so far as they are able and see fit so to do, give them as they have written them. This was the wont of Bossuet, when any unusual occasion required him to speak; so, too Bourdaloue, Massillon,

and the greater number of those who have published their discourses. It was the practice of Newman to write and compose carefully, though he then read his sermons. It is the exception that can prudently dispense with writing. Fénelon did it; so, too, Bossuet at times; there are missionaries who can do it; but they often have no choice in the matter, for they lack the time, though seldom the inclination to write, and, besides, God assists them in an especial manner. Those who think themselves qualified to imitate such, and have neither talent nor grace above the ordinary measure, rarely do even fairly. Their discourses, if they can be called such, leave much to be desired: they are vague, verbose, full of generalities and unskilful repetition, void of ideas, lacking in interest, without substance and of little profit to anyone. *Nolo te esse declamatorem et rabulam, garrulumque sine ratione, says St. Jerome, sed mysteriorum peritum et sacramentorum Dei eruditissimum. Venerationi mihi semper fuit non verbosa rusticitas, sed sancta simplicitas. Qui in sermone imitari dicit Apostolos, prius imitetur virtutes in vita illorum.*¹ If the clouds be full, they will pour out rain upon the earth, says Ecclesiastes.²

¹ *Letters*, LII, 8; LVII.

² *Eccl.*, XI, 2.

The more intelligent, then, have need themselves, in order to give a good sermon, to prepare carefully, and with labor.¹ Ideas and thoughts are conceived and born but with the pains of parturition; labor and pains-taking effort are the condition of all achievement. "Composition," says Père de Ravignan, "is a kind of martyrdom. Yet when one works, as he ought, under the eye of God, with a view to the welfare of souls, and in the spirit of prayer, the labor or travail is real prayer; the most efficacious of all prayers in bringing down the blessings of Heaven upon the preacher and his work. As a matter of fact, those sermons are worth most that have cost most effort in preparation, and their intrinsic worth is the measure of the fruit they yield."²

¹ Council of Trent, Session xxiv, *De Reform.* 7.

² It is told of Mother Seton, that, one day on hearing a young priest excuse the poor discourse he had just delivered by saying that he was hardly prepared to preach, she readily spoke out her feelings. "Father," said she, "that is one thing I cannot bear. Do you realize that the honor of God is on the lips of the priest? Do you think that you should take no pains to spread that fire which His Son has come on earth to enkindle? If now you are careless as to how you preach, what will you be later in life? Take my words, I pray you, as the advice of a mother." *Life of Mother Seton.*

And there is no exception, to this need of preparation, by reason of one's congregation or parish. Consider and emulate the example of the Curé of Ars. In the first years of his ministry he gave himself much hard work in order to do well in the pulpit. He counted no cost provided he was able to get up a sermon that would interest his parishioners and bring home to them the truths of faith. He did not wait until the last days of the week to give thought to his homily or to his instruction. He began to occupy his mind with it as soon as he could. He lived with it, pondering it over in his mind and heart, and would then give whole days to the composition of it. When he had done writing, he would go into the pulpit and deliver it to empty benches, which he peopled with his imagination, picturing his hearers, whom he knew, even as he had done when writing it. By virtue of this practice he came at last to be able to preach worthily and effectively without much preparation.

“The *‘dabitur vobis’* is the conceit of those who think they preach as the Apostles did, and hence dispense with special preparation. I beg them to consider this, that the simple discourses of men of

eminent virtue are productive of good only because these men make up by their fidelity to meditation what others arrive at by study. These friends of God reflect much upon the practical truths of religion; they strive at producing in their own hearts sensible affections, and endeavor to live in the presence of God, so that when called upon to speak to souls they have no need of especial immediate preparation, being always ready, occupied always with truths of faith and their hearts ever full of affections towards God and the things of God, such as they would wish to teach to or to excite in others. They need not turn their mind to the subject to be treated, because it is already upon that very thing."¹

In the more solemn discourses, and those which require most careful preparation, it is always of importance that one be simple and keep within the understanding of every listener. Incorrectness or negligence is simply intolerable and offensive: the faithful suppose that a priest will know how to use better language and grammar than themselves, and expect, too, that in fact he will do so. However, nothing technical or academic: the scientific words

¹ *Life of Brother Solano, Franciscan.*

and phrases of the lecture hall and the text-book are to be translated into homely and every-day English of the people: otherwise they cannot understand. Again, have a care not to be pompous or pretentious; artificiality or eccentricity are equally out of place, and vulgar. Such things are not prompted by a true Christian spirit, nor are they in keeping with the rules of eloquence which consists in ideas and sentiments, and not in idle expressions. Do not try to imitate the great preachers. What was natural and becoming in them will be otherwise in you. Know your limitations and respect them. The needs of the faithful about you are urgent and their wants are simple enough. Let the priest imitate Our Savior, telling the people of things most sublime, yet in the simplest and most unaffected speech. Let him imitate St. Augustine, giving familiar and wholesome instruction with all charity to the faithful of Hippo, and seeking to show to the minds of these poor and lowly fisher-folk the deepest mysteries and truths. There is a way of speaking from the heart and to the heart, without being sonorous or brilliant, or aiming at striking utterances, but with firmness, impressiveness, mildness, directness,

and unction. This sort of preaching really enlightens; it reaches souls and leaves its impression; it helps the listeners to enter into the dispositions of him who speaks, and does more lasting good than discourses of any other sort, be their merits in other respects what they will.¹

3. In general, the immediate preparation of a sermon is the more easy as the remote preparation has been more perfect, or as the preacher himself has been better formed to, and has exercised better his ministry.

When some one remarked to Père Lacordaire that he was fortunate to be able to improvise and to speak so with fluent eloquence and without preparation, he replied: "Who has that idea, little realizes what those Conferences cost me. They are my constant preoccupation throughout the year. They are never out of my mind." And he added: "You are not aware that before going into the pulpit of Notre

¹ "The Son of God could have ravished men with an eloquence all-divine: He would not do so. Rather, in teaching His Gospel and its virtues, He always made use of ordinary and familiar words and phrases. Why should anyone wish to do otherwise? The representative or interpreter should not use language different from the Master's." (ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.)

Dame, I have worked and toiled unceasingly with all seriousness for fifteen years, and that during that time I have preached the Word of God in divers places and circumstances. No one will ever come to speak or preach as is becoming except by a deal of study and practice."

Therefore, it should be clear that if one wishes to make of himself a good and helpful preacher, he has but one course; to labor much, to apply himself to study, and to develop one's mind, that is, one's thinking faculty, which by the way, is not the same as an aptitude for study: pondering over a subject is not the same always as studying it. Besides these, one must develop, perfect his soul, and beget the heart of an apostle. How? By what means? By prayer, by meditation above all, and by all the practices of piety and of Christian perfection, the acquaintance and use of which one learned at the seminary; by living in retirement, in so far as is compatible with one's position, in recollection, in humility, and in purity of heart. *Lectio inquirat, oratio postulat, meditatio invenit, contemplatio degustat*, says St. Bernard, in his treatise on *How to Pray*. It is in this way only

that the Spirit of God is attracted to our souls, that the science of the saints is acquired, and the zeal of apostles imbibed and fostered. *The wise man shall give his heart to resort early to the Lord, and he shall pray in the sight of the Most High. The Lord will fill him with the spirit of understanding, and as showers will he pour forth the wisdom he has learned. And he shall direct his counsel, and in His secrets shall he meditate. He shall show forth the discipline he hath learned.*¹ *Flumina de ventre ejus fluent aquae vivae.*² Holy priests are always eloquent, or they soon become such. They preach divinely, as the Pontifical asks of them: *Praedicatu divino*. They convince; they touch; they persuade; they produce fruit unto grace and salvation.³

There is a saying that *every man is eloquent in his own cause*. Statesmen, advocates, poets, savants, soldiers, and business men are always willing to speak when their interests are at stake. Why, then, should not the priest be able to speak as they;

¹ ECCLUS., xxxix, 6-10.

² JOHN, vii, 38.

³ "I would much prefer," said Fénelon in his *Dialogue on Eloquence*, "that sermons be so prepared as not to require too much pains-taking. The homilies of the Fathers were far from being the labored things that our panegyrics seem."

easily, with the same readiness and willingness, when the honor of God, His kingdom, and His laws are the issue? Certainly, if we were as full of our priestly work as they are of theirs, if we were as alive to the things and interests of faith and if we had it as much at heart to teach, to share these things with others, would we not find therein our most congenial occupation? There are then, two things that withhold us and make us dumb or reticent: (1) We are habitually occupied with other things; our minds are given over, for the most part of our waking hours, to thoughts wherein God has no share or place. It is only from time to time, and then by a sort of compulsion, that we think upon the things of Heaven, the truths of revelation, the mysteries and virtues of Our Savior. Wherefore, do we lack thoughts upon these things, and utterance fails us or comes but with effort when occasion requires that we speak of them. (2) We are of the persuasion that to be a successful preacher, it is necessary also to be an orator, to speak with rhetorical finish, to get up sermons like to those literary masterpieces we find in books. The sooner and more completely we get rid of these notions the better.

We must learn to forget ourselves in our subject; to believe that we shall speak and preach well when we shall have learned to tell, as St. Paul did, of that grace which works in our own hearts and of which we feel the helpfulness and usefulness unto the work of instructing and purifying and making holy the hearts and souls of men.

XXVIII.

CAN ONE HAVE RECOURSE TO BOOKS OF SERMONS AND
DERIVE PROFIT FROM THE USE OF THEM?

There are some that can be read with advantage, and, furthermore, it is always well to read some such on the subject that one is about to treat. Reading of this sort can open up vistas of thought and be suggestive of ideas. But, one should never think of appropriating these sermons, or of borrowing from any, be it what it may, a considerable portion. A sermon written at one epoch, or in other circumstances, prompted or inspired by other conditions and for another congregation, howsoever fine that sermon be, will not be fitting on our lips and in

our position. The quality most essential to a sermon, and its chiefest merit, will be *fitness*; a perfect fitness, both to persons and to circumstances. *Sermo opportunus est optimus*, says Proverbs.¹

In imitating set sermons of the classical type, one runs the risk of being formal, stiff and cold, lacking life and naturalness, and of being ponderous. A style of speaking that is less solemn and more communicative is worth far more: a manner that is easy, a style that is animated, direct, and with a smart progression of ideas, is what is desirable. It is preferable that one should study or read spiritual writers rather than great preachers. Though less practical, perhaps, they will be found to contain more doctrine; the very meat of a sermon. They go deeper into a subject, and it is much easier to draw from them ideas that in themselves will prove prolific. Take from them what you find to be best adapted to your purpose; then, after reflection and prayer, take the pen and write your sermon, more or less fully, but always with a mind to your hearers.

¹ xv, 23; cf. *Roman Cat. Proem.*, 2.

XXIX.

THE MANNER OF DELIVERY, AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN
PREACHING.

It has its importance, indeed, yet it is far from easy to trace precise rules; it is more difficult still to reduce them to practice. Beyond a doubt, each one should try to profit by any advice or instruction that he may receive in regard to this matter, and, above all, to overcome any faults to which he may be subject. But art is not a great factor in the making of effective preachers, either as regards their address, gestures, or delivery proper. The great principle, which can never be disregarded is this: *Be natural*. In articulation, in tone of voice, and in gestures, this is the "bone rule." Then, too, give attention to clearness and distinctness of articulation, to justness and sincerity of tone, so that it may ring true; and finally, make no gesture for the sake of a gesture, but only when prompted thereto by feeling or with the same purpose that prompts the tone and the words. Let the priest keep in touch with his listeners by thought and look, observing

them and reminding himself that the only purpose he had in addressing them was to tell them something, to communicate some idea to them, to share with them some sentiment, and to convince them, to touch and persuade them, to lead them to the purposes he has: then he will have done all that goes to make the externals of a preacher. He is sure, then, to be listened to, and with interest. Sympathy, variety, and effectiveness are thus realized in a sermon. The voice may not be particularly pleasing; but the tone will never be false or unreal. The gestures made may be awkward, abrupt, or crude; but they will not be meaningless, affected, limp, dainty, pretentious, or, in a word, distracting or annoying.

Provided that in the preacher be realized the one thing necessary, that men see in him the soul and purpose of a priest, evinced in conviction, sincerity, and well meaning towards them, the defects of oratory will be no hindrance to his ministry of the Word of God. He will enlighten; he will touch their hearts; he will sanctify their souls. "To believe and to love; herein lies the secret and the means of speaking unto men."

PART IV.
MEDITATIONS ON MAJOR ORDERS.

THE ORDER OF DEACON.

MEDITATION I.

THE EXCELLENCE OF PREACHING.

FIRST POINT. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the model of all preachers and the source of all preaching. Before His day there were prophets who spoke to men in the name of God; but these appeared among men only at intervals long distant, addressed themselves only to the people of Israel, and, in speaking of the Messias, they did scarce more than to foretell His coming and His reign and to make them desired. It was through the Messias Himself that God wished to reveal Himself to the world. It is by His Incarnate Son, says the Apostle, that He has taught us what we have need to know: His perfections, purposes, laws; *At sundry times and in divers manners, God spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets; last of all in these days He hath spoken to us by His Son.*¹ Henceforth no troublous questionings to re-

¹ **HEB., I, 1.**

solve, no further revelation to be awaited with longing. There only remains that His gospel be preached and explained that it may be accepted and put into practical life everywhere and by all. To the Apostles and the ministry that succeeds them in the government of the Church He entrusted this mission and laid it upon them as a charge. He made of them His interpreters and organs of communication. Who hears them hears Him; 'tis His teaching that is listened to and received. Thus is He the light of the world, its supernatural and divine light, that is vouchsafed to every man that cometh into this world, to show him the way and guide him to his final end. Adore, then, the Spirit of this Divine Master, full of truth as of grace, and tender Him your admiring homage for that gospel of His preaching that has not ceased to re-echo in all places the oracles of His wisdom. *He hath dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth, and of His fulness have we all received.*¹ Thank Him as best you may that He has invited you to draw at this source, not only, as do all His followers, the mere knowledge needful for your guidance, considerable though it be, but yet

¹ JOHN, I, 14-16.

more as His minister that deeper, fuller knowledge necessary to those who must enlighten their brethren and be of help to them in the ordering of their own lives. Ask of Him the grace to correspond generously to His designs upon you.

SECOND POINT. In order to appreciate the excellence of the ministry of preaching the Gospel, it will be enough to consider three things: what it is that one preaches, the purpose of preaching, and the fruits thereof.

1. *The subject matter of preaching.* It is no human science, or anything of the sort that man can acquire by the exercise of his native faculties; it is revelation; that supernatural communication that God has been pleased to make us of His thoughts, His will, and His purposes, in order to associate us with Him in this life, to impart to us His very life while we are yet upon earth, and to enable us to merit a share in His glory for all eternity. Hence can there be no comparison, whether by reason of the sublimity of these truths or by reason of certitude of teaching, between the word uttered by the priest in the pulpit and the utterances of the most learned in their chairs of science. (1) As regards loftiness, sublimity of

ideas. It is not that revelation may not concern itself with truths of the purely rational order, nor that God has not judged suitable to give, by means of revelation, to a certain number of matters of human science an absolute certitude; but this was not His primary purpose. He sought, first of all to make up for the impotence of our reason by revealing to us some truths of a higher order; truths to the knowledge of which our minds could never have attained; which knowledge, however, we must needs have if we are to correspond to His designs. The Trinity, creation, man's fall and restoration, the Incarnation of the Word, redemption, the love of Our Lord for our souls, the union He deigns to have with us through His Spirit, the graces He is desirous of giving us, the glory to which He destines us, the means necessary to meriting His gifts and to entering into the possession of His kingdom; all these God has willed to teach us, first of all through His Son, and all this He makes to be repeated and taught in His Church continually through His ministers. No one can fail to be struck by the sublimity of these things so revealed, or to realize in some measure the heights to which the contemplation of these ideas

lifts our minds and hearts. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord God; for as the heavens are lifted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts.*¹ *Omnia magna sunt quae dicimus. De re grandi eloquentia nostra.*² The genius of mind could not have discovered these truths: they had never been known to us, had not the Spirit of God given them to us. *Thou hast hid these from the wise and revealed them to little ones.*³ *These the learned Plato knew not, and of the same the eloquent Demosthenes knew nothing.*⁴ (2) As regards certitude preaching surpasses all mere human teaching. It is absolute, evident, and unquestionable in its authority, because it rests upon Truth itself, the Word of God. The preacher has not to establish, make good his assertions by reasoning. It is enough that, like Our Savior, he tell in whose name he speaks, and show his credentials: *My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent Me.*⁵ *You believe in God, believe also*

¹ ISAIAH, LV, 8.

³ MATT., XI, 25.

² ST. AUG., *De doctr. christ.*,
IV, 18.

⁴ ST. JEROME, *Let.*, LIII, 4.

⁵ JOHN, VII, 16.

*in Me.*¹ He cannot err but in preaching his own notions or in taking issue with the whole Church.

2. *The purpose of preaching.* It is supernatural. The preacher does not content himself with teaching others how to live an honorable life here on earth. Nor does he aim merely at forming the minds of his hearers; developing their intelligence, or bringing their moral faculties to the perfection of which they are capable; he aspires to giving them a new spirit, rousing them to a new life, inspiring them with thoughts, sentiments, yearnings, such as befit children of God who are called to live in the glory of heaven for all eternity. Every preacher ought to say to himself, when entering the pulpit, that which the Son of Man said when entering the world: *I am come that men may have life, and have it more abundantly.*² I must aid, excite, arouse, urge these souls to a life worthy of heaven, to the life to which Our Lord has called us all, to the life that has God for its source and end: *That denying, foregoing worldly desires, we should live soberly, justly, and godly in this world, looking forward to the blessed hope and the*

¹ JOHN, XIV, 1.

² JOHN, X, 10.

*coming of the great God and Our Savior Jesus.*¹ Of a truth, the child receives at Baptism, together with sanctifying grace, the very principle of supernatural life, the germ of virtues, theological and others. But, if a person has a certain number of years to spend upon earth, it will not be enough that he have this germ, this principle of life in his heart and soul: he must yet develop that germ, make that principle of life functional, bring that germ to the fulness of virtues by the exercise of a Christian life, by observance of the law of God, by resistance to temptations, and by the acquisition of merits. But it is just to teach this duty and to bring souls to the will to fulfil it, that Holy Church wants the revealed truths preached to them, and that her ministers cease not to repeat to men the exhortations, the threats, and the promises of the Savior: *Faith, then, cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ.*²

3. *The results of preaching.* They are the self-same fruits of the Redemption and the very same good things that the Savior has acquired for us through His sacrifice. Were it not for the preaching

¹ TITUS, II, 13.

² ROM., X, 17.

of the Gospel what would the Incarnation of God's Son and His death upon the cross have profited us? Preaching it is that has converted the world, broken the empire of sin, established the Church everywhere, and filled heaven with saints: *destroyed death, and hath brought to light life and incorruption by the gospel.*¹ God filled with light the souls of the Apostles, and by them enlightened all peoples: *For God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus.*² And if you will but consider the effects that the Word of God still works in the Church and in the souls of men, you will remark that they are ever the same. It enlightens men, it brings them to think, it converts them. *Never should I have returned to God,* says St. Augustine, *had I not heard Ambrose.*³ Where preaching is neglected, or poorly done, there piety and faith languish, vice takes deep root, and scandal dares to lift its head. But wherever the Gospel is preached with sincere and unflagging zeal, there you will find that faith is strongly dominant, that religion

¹ II TIM., I, 10.

² Conf., VI, Contr. Jul., I, 10.

³ II COR., IV, 6.

is respected, and virtue practised. The word of God is as seed to be sown. If the grain is to be grown, the seed must be put in the ground, then the land must be tilled, the plant cultivated, and the grain harvested: *He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings.*¹ "I just come from a visit to one of my parishes way up in the Alps, wrote a bishop some time ago to a colleague in France, and it did my heart good to see and think upon the evidence of religious instruction, the purity of morals, and the solidity of piety that I found there. I have seen what the zeal of a good pastor can accomplish."² Is it not this that the Holy Spirit would give us to understand, when He announces to the people of Israel that, as a reward for their fidelity, He will give them pastors after His own heart, who will nourish them with knowledge and doctrine: *Dabo vobis pastores juxta cor meum, et pascent vos scientia et doctrina?*³

THIRD POINT. Ask yourself if you have the esteem for preaching that it deserves; if you are wont

¹ II COR., IX, 6.

³ JER., III, 15.

² *Life of Bishop Mathieu.*

to consider it, not as the word of man, more or less potent according to the talent of him who proclaims it, but as God's word, having its own peculiar efficacy and a potency all divine to enlighten, touch, and sanctify the souls of men: *Virtus Dei ad salutem*.¹ The Master has said: *My words are spirit and life*.² Is not every preacher authorised to say after Him the same thing? Since his words do not differ from those of the Savior, they ought to have from their first source a superhuman virtue, that can do wondrous things in the hearts of men: *The voice of the Lord is in power: the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the cedars of Libanus*.³ And you, if you have this regard for preaching, if you look upon it as a holy function, of chiefest importance, then you will greatly desire to acquit yourself of it well, and, to that end, to acquire much knowledge and virtue. You are going to be a preacher of the teachings of Jesus Christ, of His maxims, of His virtues: to do this well, worthily, sincerely, and with fruit, should you not be another Jesus Christ, in that you have within you His spirit and His heart? And if you be other than this, what accent of conviction or of authority

¹ ROM., I, 6.

² JOHN, VI, 64.

³ PS., XXVIII, 5.

can there possibly be to your words? Will you not feel that you are only playing a rôle, and should you not fear that others will be as well aware of that as yourself, and that they will blame you and think the less of you and your ministry for it?

Think of the confusion felt by the prophets when they reflected upon the ministry entrusted to or imposed upon them: *Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am but a child.*¹ *Woe is me, because I am a man of unclean lips.*² Learn to say over and over before God the prayer made by the deacon at the altar before he chants the Gospel: *O Almighty God, Thou who didst cleanse the lips of the prophet Isaias with a burning coal, cleanse my lips and my heart, that I may be able worthily to proclaim the holy Gospel.*

MEDITATION II.

THE PREACHING OFFICE.

FIRST POINT. Consider what were the sentiments and thoughts of Our Lord at the commencement of His preaching: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me;*

¹ JER., I, 6.

² IS., VI, 5.

wherefore *He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of reward.* Herein we see what the minister of the Gospel should say to himself, for that he is called upon to carry on the work of the Divine Master. He may not take up this mission altogether of His own volition or initiative. The Spirit of God must be in him. He should have received the grace of the Spirit in its fulness, that he may be able to communicate it to others without impoverishing himself therein: it should be that the Pontiff will say to him in God's stead: *Oportet praedicare.* *How can one preach,* asks St. Paul, *if he have received no mission?*¹ Learn from these considerations what is the dignity of such a function as preaching: and, as best you can, judge of the duties it imposes and the application of mind and heart it calls for. Ask Our Lord to give you whatever may be lacking in you now to a worthy fulfillment of this office. Pray Him to animate you with His Spirit, to be the very soul of your soul, in order that your words, like

¹ Rom., x, 15.

His own, may be to all the faithful words of life and salvation.

SECOND POINT. The preacher can consider his office under three aspects: as an honor, as a duty, as a responsibility.

1. *An honor.* What more honorable than to exercise the same ministry as the Son of God, to engage in the same work and with the self-same means! What more noble than to be associated with the Apostles, to continue their labors, and to have a share in their merits! What more glorious than to shed around one the light of truth, *sicut luminaria in mundo*,¹ to make God known, to tell men of His grandeurs, His perfections, His works; to inform souls of their origin, their destiny, their duties! What more holy than to teach the faithful the practise of virtue, to help them to self-sanctification, to the leading of a life truly Christian and to the meriting of glory in heaven for all eternity! And is it not all this that one does in preaching the doctrine of our faith? *Haec proponens, bonus eris minister Christi Jesu, enutritus verbis fidei et bonae doctrinae*, says the Apostle.² Nor is it a passing honor, of a

¹ PHIL., II, 15.

² I TIM., IV, 6.

mere moment, like the honors of the world: they who shall have exercised worthily their functions in this ministry upon earth will have part in the glory of the Son of God in His kingdom. As the elect will chant eternally the praise of the Savior Who has brought them safe from darkness and death and ushered them into His abode of life and light, so the souls that a preacher shall have reached by his ministry, converted and sanctified, will never cease to bless him and tell him of their gratitude for the great and good service he has done them. Unendingly his praise will be upon their lips for the use he made in their behalf of the graces and talent God has vouchsafed him. And through all eternity God also will make recompense to him and will share with him the glory He Himself will have derived from the labors of His good and faithful minister: *Qui ad justitiam erudiunt multos fulgebunt in perpetuas eternitates.*¹ This thought ravished the soul of St. Theresa and made her to exclaim: "I would give my very life could I but be entrusted with such a ministry."

¹ DAN., XII, 3.

2. *A duty, a grave obligation.* It is not for themselves that the ministers of the Church receive the power and the grace to preach, but rather for the glory of God and for the salvation of their brethren. What God Our Lord said to the Apostles, *Praedicate Evangelium; Docete omnes gentes*, the Church says to those whom she associates with them in the same ministry: *Sit doctrina vestra spiritualis medicina populo Dei*. If they do not profitably employ the talent God has given them, they are not dispensers of the grace of God, but wasters of His gifts; they are of the number of idle and unprofitable servants. And no one may say that he is but a priest in the Church having no care of souls. Why, then, has he given himself to His Lord, if not to coöperate in His work amongst souls, and to employ in His service the talents he holds from Him? There are divers ways, indeed, whereby one can serve Him, and there are manifold functions to be fulfilled. But the good rule, the law of charity is to do all the good one can and to render, make return to God in the proportion that one has received from Him. Will it not be the wish of our hearts on the last day to have so conducted ourselves. Unhappy those whom the

sovereign Judge will have to reproach with being unworthy servants; who will have no worthy excuse to offer in their own behalf! *Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel*, says St. Paul.¹ He that could have come to the succor of one of his fellows, and who, for sloth, not willing to incommode himself, left him to die in his wretchedness, can he flatter himself, asks St. John, that he has anything of the charity of Christ in his heart? *He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?*²

3. *A responsibility.* Not to preach the word of God, when one is held to it, or to preach it with negligence, is not only to fail in a serious obligation and to bring loss to one's self, but it is, besides, to expose at the same time a considerable number of souls to perdition. Why? Because preaching is one of the most effective means whereby to convert and to sanctify the souls of others. To neglect it is to take upon one's self the blame for those disorders and infidelities that one could and should remedy; it is to take the blame for losses or irregularities of

¹ I COR., IX, 16.

² I JOHN, III, 16.

such souls as it was one's duty to sanctify and make holy to God. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: and thou shalt hear the word out of My mouth, and shall tell it to them from Me. If, when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: thou declare it not to him, that he may be converted from his wicked way and live: the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand. Moreover, if the just man shall turn from justice and do iniquity, because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin; but I will require his blood at thy hand.*¹ These words apply to the preacher of the Gospel as rigorously as to the prophet of the Old Law; for the ministers of Jesus Christ are not the less obliged to serve as organs, spokesmen of the Lord in order to teach virtue and to combat vice: *For Christ we are ambassadors, God as it were beseeching you through us.*² This should suffice to make us feel something of the responsibility of the preacher, to understand how great is the peril to which he exposes himself if he neglects to instruct and to exhort the souls whom Christ has confided to his care. To him can be applied in all its sever-

¹ EZECHIEL, III, 17-21.

² II COR V, 20.

ity that word spoken by Our Lord to all the faithful:
*For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned.*¹

THIRD POINT. Return thanks to God for the honor He does you in associating you with the Apostles in their ministry, and in requiring of you that you preach the doctrine of His Son; but, at the same time, consider well the burden that He places upon you, and arouse in your heart a wholesome fear of not fulfilling duly the obligations that are part of this ministry. Men there are, who acquit themselves of this mission miserably enough, under divers pretexts. Some of them sin therein through sloth. It requires much labor if one would give solid instruction or preach exhortations that reach the hearts of men. The slothful shrink from effort such as this; they lose their time in idleness or in occupations that are no business of theirs. Others again are too timid. Fearing to undertake too much or to be unsuccessful, they find it more to their liking to attempt nothing at all, or to speak as little as possible. With many failure is due to discouragement. They have essayed it often, and their ef-

¹ MATT., XII, 37.

forts have seemed to them fruitless: they have persuaded themselves that preaching for them is a hopeless endeavor, and that their field, till it as they may, will yield naught but brambles and thorns. These reasons, one and all, are idle and foolish. One need not be an orator in order to preach well: *Vivus sermo Dei et efficax*. If one cannot speak as an orator, let him speak as a man of God, as a good pastor, as a priest that has fervor and zeal, for all these at least one should be. St. Paul required nothing more of Timothy: *Preach the word: be instant in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine.*¹ One does not dread or fear contempt when one is not seeking honor. And besides, is it not nearly always enough to exhort Christians to live worthily and to save their souls, to recall, in all modesty and sincerity, to their minds their beliefs and their obligations in order to gain a hearing, to command their respect and even win their obedience? Good souls, disposed to hear God's word and to profit by it, are to be found everywhere. Of course all is not accomplished in a day; one must have patience and perseverance. But in

¹ II TIM., IV, 2.

what work are these not needful? *Take my brethren, for an example of labor and patience, the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we account them blessed who have endured. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth: patiently bearing until he receive the early and latter rain.*¹

Retain this word of Zachary to his son:

And thou, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High:

For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways:

*To give knowledge of salvation to His people,
Unto the remission of their sins.*²

MEDITATION III.

WHO WOULD PREACH MUST PRAY.

FIRST POINT. The Divine Master always combined prayer with preaching. Before He would address Himself to men (and after He had done so), He would first address Himself to His Father and ask of Him grace for those to whom He was about

¹ JAMES, v, 10, 7.

² LUKE, i, 76.

to preach. The Holy Spirit descended upon Him at the Jordan and gave Him the mission of preaching to the poor; but, previous to this, He had spent forty days and forty nights at prayer and penance in the wilderness. And always while giving instruction to those gathered about Him, He lived still in the presence of the Father and invoked Him unceasingly: *I confess to Thee, Father, for that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them to little ones.* After a discourse He would return thanks to Him, recommend to Him those whom He had just instructed or exhorted: *Father, I give Thee thanks that Thou hearest Me always. Father, I pray for them, that Thou mayest keep them from evil, that they may be sanctified in truth.* Often in the course of His labors would He pause, recollect Himself, or withdraw, go apart to some lonely hilltop, there to pray undisturbed. "Was it that He had need so much of prayer, so to interest His Father in His labors and to obtain His graces," asks St. Ambrose? "No; He sought rather to give example to His ministers, and to show them, to give them to understand that alone they could not effectively carry on His work: *You are given there*

*an object lesson, an exemplar, the way is marked out that you must tread.*¹ Hence, the esteem the Apostles had for prayer, and their own application to this holy exercise: *We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*² *We cease not to pray for you.*³ These examples should bring you to a conviction of your own obligation to seek of Heaven its blessing on your preaching. Ask Our Lord to make you feel the importance of prayer in the ministry you would undertake for His sake, and to help you to see the reasons therefor.

SECOND POINT. Why should prayer be so necessary in the ministry of preaching? For two reasons: in order to insure the blessing of Heaven upon one's labors and to conserve in them ever the supernatural spirit that should inspire and animate them.

1. The preacher can accomplish nothing without the grace of God; for the work he undertakes is not a human task. It is *de fide* that the efforts of man do not suffice to preach with effect. If man is unable to convert and sanctify himself by his own unaided endeavor, how can he think so to be able

¹ ST. AMB., *In Luc.*, v 43.

² COL., I, 9.

³ ACTS, VII, 4.

to convert and sanctify others? *Sufficientia nostra ex Deo est*, says the Apostle.¹ God indeed wills to make use of men in the accomplishment of this work; but men are only His instruments thereto. He lends them His understanding, as it were, and communicates to them His virtue. It is He that puts on their lips the words that feel to the souls of men, move, and sanctify them. He alone can give to their listeners an attentive mind and a docile heart, make them comprehend and relish the truths that are announced to them, and engrave upon their hearts deep convictions and arouse them to generous resolutions. *For God it is who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish.*² For, this is a grace, or rather an abundance of graces that He owes to no one, and concerning which He is altogether free to place the conditions. And what, then, is the condition that it has pleased Him to set, and which we must fulfil or meet if we would obtain such grace? We know it well enough already: *prayer*. The means whereby to obtain His help, is to ask for it in the name of Our Lord, to ask it in His spirit and for His glory: *Ask and you shall receive*.

¹ II COR., III, 5.

² PHIL., II, 13.

*Amen, I say unto you, whatsoever you ask the Father in My name He will give it to you. And who are the ones to ask it? They who have need of it or are interested in the obtaining of it; the preachers of the Gospel, therefore, first of all: I have chosen you, says He, that you may bring forth fruit, fruit unto salvation and life eternal: Ego elegi vos et posui vos ut eatis et fructus vester maneat.*¹ Do, then, in this regard what the glory of God requires of you. Ask His succour. Solicit His graces. You will never ask in vain. All that you shall ask in the interest of your ministry, He will accord you liberally: *Ut quodcumque petieritis Patrem in nomine meo det vobis.* Cease not, then, to pray, if you would not cease to receive. The spirit of prayer is the spirit of grace: *Spiritus gratiae et precum.*² "One will effect more conversions in prayer at the foot of the altar than in preaching from the raised pulpit or in traversing vast provinces," says St. Francis Xavier. St. Chrysostom was persuaded that St. Paul did more to convert souls by his praying than by his preaching.

¹ JOHN, xv, 16.

² ZAC., xii, 10.

2. Needful as prayer is to the preacher, that his labors may be fruitful, it is quite as necessary for his own sake in order to conserve in him the convictions, the sentiments, and the fervor that his ministry requires. To announce the word of God with becoming readiness and forcefulness, to preach with zeal the dogmas of faith and the maxims of the Gospel, to inspire in the faithful a due respect for holy things, a love of the Church, a true regard for perfection, a desire of heaven, it will not be enough to have some sort of notion of these great things: one must, as it were, feed his mind upon them, ponder them in his heart; they should recur readily and habitually to his thoughts, one should have an adequate concept, a real sense of their excellence, their grandeur, their needfulness, and be impressed, penetrated, preoccupied therewith. And how may one arrive at this? What is there that can bring us to such a knowledge and sense of the truths of faith, what is there that will bring home to us the importance and certainty, and unfold to us the beauty of divine things, if not the habit of prayer and the practice of meditation. *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini*,¹ says the Psalmist. Why was it that St. Paul

¹ Ps. 1, xxiii, 6.

was ravished to the third heaven, to behold and to hear of wonders unspeakable? It was, according to St. Maxim, to make of him a worthy Doctor of the entire Church: *That, as future Doctor of the Churches, he might learn of the things he should preach unto men.*¹ And on the other hand, what is that touches the heart, softens and warms it, and fills it with pious affections and desires that make for holiness? Is it not, again, prayer and meditation? *In meditatione mea exardescet ignis*, says the Psalmist; and St. Thomas: *From the womb of contemplation is preaching brought forth.*² Wherefore, pray, meditate, lift your soul to God, you who would announce the word of God and would impart His Spirit to the souls of men. *Go thou up on the heights of the mountain, thou who wouldst bring good tidings to Sion.*³ When you shall be filled with His light and His love, you will have only to communicate to the faithful the knowledge you shall have received and the sentiments you shall have been given to feel. It was not to the Apostles alone that it was said: *Dabitur vobis quid loquamini*, says St. Gregory. It is not to them alone that Our Divine Master wills

¹ *Homil.*² 2a-2ae, q. 188, a. 6.³ ISAIAH, XL, 9.

to give unworldly wisdom, lips of knowledge, and a tongue of fire. *Quos de se replet, ardentes simul et loquentes facit.*¹

THIRD POINT. Think always of the office of the preacher as a supernatural ministry, and of his word as the instrument of divine grace for the instruction and sanctification of souls. Have a care never to lower, in your estimation, the representative of the Divine Master to the level of a profane orator, who uses his talent to win, to attach an audience to himself, to propagate his own views, and to bend his hearers to his own purposes. Think, rather, of Our Lord whose place the preacher holds, whose utterances he does but repeat. Reflect that he can and does say to you, as did the Apostles: *As from God, before God, in Christ I speak.*² *And for me, that speech may be given me to make known the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador.*³ When you yourself shall be called to exercise this ministry, believe that it is infinitely beyond your talents, as it is above your merits, and that you are in need unqualified of the grace of God to fulfil it well. Prepare your-

¹ *In Ev., Homil., xxx.*

² *EPH. VI, 20.*

³ *II COR., II, 7.*

self thereto, then, with religiousness and piety, as you would to the conferring of a sacrament or to approaching the altar. Ask of the Holy Spirit to enlighten you, to inspire you, and to make you holy. Know well that all you may attempt without Him will be labor in vain: that your voice can but strike, fall upon unheeding ears, for He alone can speak to the heart. Unite in purpose with Him each time you have to announce His word; strive to become more and more attentive to His inspirations and ever more docile to His leading: *Deus qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti, da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere.*

Recall often to mind this anecdote in the life of Père Lejeune, the great Oratorian missionary of the seventeenth century. Being asked what is required of one to become a good preacher, he replied: "One must pray well." "And besides that?" "One must pray well, and pray always. The priest who has the gift of prayer has what he needs to become a good preacher. Knowing how to speak to God, he cannot but speak usefully to men."

MEDITATION IV.

TO PREACHING MUST BE JOINED EXAMPLE.

FIRST POINT. Our Lord characterized in one word the Pharisees who were teachers of the Law of Moses. Their doctrine was by no means bad; but their conduct did not tally with it. They behaved quite otherwise than they taught: *They say and do not. For they bind heavy and insupportable burdens, and lay them upon men's shoulders; yet with their own finger will they not so much as move them.*¹ The Son of God trod a very different road. He began by doing first what He wished to teach: *Coepit facere et docere*. Far from exempting Himself from the rules He traced for His disciples, He ordered His conduct thereby in a measure and with a degree of perfection that was vastly superior to what He asked of them. What virtue can you think of that He was not seen to practise in a way altogether heroic and even superhuman? Thus is shown you the method to follow if you, too, would persuade: *Verba movent; exempla trahunt*. It is also the one the Master prescribed for His disciples. *You are the light of the*

¹ MATT., XXIII, 3.

world. Your calling exposes you to the gaze and scrutiny of all men. So behave that none may ever see in you aught but holiness of conduct that will do honor to God and make Him honored of others: *So let your light shine among men that they may behold your good works and give honor to your Father who is in heaven.*¹ And this is what they did after Him. Their deeds have been no less admirable than their doctrine; and, it is doubtless more by their virtues than by their doctrine that they converted the world. Such, too, is the method, naturally, that the Church recommends, and that she cannot but wish to see her ministers follow, one and all: *And the things to be done, let them speak out, and let them complement their words in works; that in both they may build up the Holy Church. Praedicatu divino, exemplo perfecto.*² Pray Our Lord that you may begin in this way. Offer Him a sincere desire of practising always first the doctrine you have to teach and of preaching His virtues by your example thereof still more than by your words.

SECOND POINT. The preacher who joins example to counsel, gives to his discourse the surest sort of

¹ MATT., v, 16.

² *Pontifical, De lect.; De Diac.*

basis. He that will not accord his life with his teaching can effect no good whatever: he will hurt souls rather than be of help to them.

1. *That voice more readily penetrates the hearts of listeners, which the life of the speaker commends*, says St. Gregory. To take to themselves practically the maxims of the Gospel and to live as worthy Christians, the faithful must needs make efforts and impose sacrifices upon themselves. When a preacher shows them the necessity of these things, when he urges them thereto, the less fervent seek to excuse themselves and, as it were, to discount, to defend themselves against, his exhortations. They protest that he exaggerates, that he is over-exacting, that he does not appreciate the difficulty of what he asks. But these excuses lose their force when he himself practises faithfully that which he preaches. They do not have weight even with the minds of those who utter them, for: (a) It is clear to them that he does not speak off-hand, but that he has considered and weighed well all that he says. For how can he be ignorant, unaware of the difficulty of such a virtue when he gives the example himself? How can he not appreciate the hardship of such sacrifice when

he imposes it upon himself, first? Is it possible that he should be ignorant of what it costs to be faithful to grace, when he himself walks so resolutely and constantly in the way of perfection? (b) It is impossible to doubt his sincerity. For, were he not convinced of what he says, did he not believe thoroughly in the truths he teaches, he himself would be the very first to set them aside, discount them. Nor would he ever take such pains to conform his conduct thereto. (c) Finally, how can anyone gain-say his right to teach the moral that he does teach? Even had he no divine mission to instruct and to exhort, one would yet do wrong to despise or ignore his words. In matters of virtue, anyone is authorized to counsel what he practises, and no one need be surprised that he recommends in words the principles he deems needful to observe in his conduct. *Qui fecerit et docuerit, hic magnus vocabitur in regno coelorum*, the divine Master has said.¹ But if the preacher take no account to himself of the truths he seeks to inculcate, if he think it a trivial matter to give the lie to his words by his conduct, then one can understand that people make a by-word of his

¹ MATT., v, 19.

sermons, and that, as by retort, they return him his exhortation or recommendation in the words of the Gospel: *Medice, curā teipsum.*¹ *Who will take heed of an unscrupulous selfseeker preaching disinterestedness*, asks St. Jerome? While, on the other hand, if the priest is the first to observe his maxims, if he observes them perfectly, it is but just that he be given a hearing, that his advice be deferred to, and that his example be followed. Stout and honest hearts do not hesitate when they have a leader who says to them: Follow me; I will show you the way of duty and of honor: *Venite post me. Si quis vult venire post me, sequatur me?*²

2. *The preacher who has no care to conform his life to his teachings, does harm to souls rather than good.* As a matter of fact: (a) How will he persuade them to the practice of virtue? He is contradicting himself even while he speaks. His tongue declares one thing and his doings the opposite. His lips exhort to perfection and his example induces to lukewarmness, indifference. *Unus aedificans et unus destruens, quid prodest nisi labor?* says the Holy Spirit.³ And,

¹ LUKE, IV, 23.

² MATT., IV, 19; XXIV, 14.

³ ECCLI., XXXIV, 28.

more than this, example generally prevails, for it is a testimony that is more striking and seems the more sincere: *Of more avail is the voice of our works than the voice of our mouths. Men credit rather their eyes than their ears.*¹ (b) He who recommends to others a virtue and is known not to practise it himself, or whose practice is known to give the lie to his theory, loses all influence and credit with the faithful. They look upon him as one who really has no conviction or sincerity, who does not take his ministry seriously; an idle talker who dishonors Him in whose name he speaks: *If you will preach that the world is to be disparaged and disdained then disdain it yourself first. Annon confusio est Jesum Christum pauperem atque esurientem fartis praedicare corporibus, jejuniorumque doctrinam rubentes buccas tumentiaque ora proferre?*² Such a preacher not only discredits himself with the faithful, but he scandalizes them so, that he discredits in their minds most other preachers, too. For, they that learn of, or know his way of life are prone to believe that others are like him. Hence they come to regard most all

¹ ST. BERNARD, *In Cant.*, LIX, 3.

² ST. BER., *In Syn.*, 8.

preaching as conventional talk, more or less, as formality, done for the sake of form, or as mere *pulpit oratory*, and naturally reduce the Gospel maxims to the level of their own notions. It is easy thus to understand how the misdoings of preachers, their unbecoming and negligent behavior are a scandal in the Church, and why the Holy Spirit rebukes them so sharply for their disorderly and imperfect life: *Why dost thou declare my justices, and take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hast hated discipline: and cast my words behind thee.*¹

THIRD POINT. My God, I realize now the burden I assume in accepting to preach thy Gospel. And I see that, Thou, in imposing upon me the obligation of exhorting souls to virtue, dost impose therewith the obligation of practising the same: *Who by necessity of his position must counsel great things, is by the same necessity compelled to the same great things.*² It is to the ministers of Thy word that thou hast given command through Thy prophet, to reach up to the heights of perfection and to keep ever above the level of the multitudes: *Get thee up on the moun-*

¹ Ps., XLIX 16.

² ST. GREG., *Epist.*, LII, 7.

*tains, thou who dost announce the good tidings to Sion.*¹ There can be no doubt that to preach the Gospel, it is not required that one be altogether without defects and have reached to perfect holiness; yet, at least, one should really aspire to perfection, which is quite the same as saying that one should have and cherish a sincere esteem of Christian perfection, that one should love and desire the virtues that one preaches and seriously purpose to practise them. For, if it be otherwise with you, what else do you do in the pulpit but speak against your conscience and therein condemn yourself? It follows, in all honesty, that if one truly have the sentiments one preaches he cannot but feel obliged to put them into practice. The same convictions, the same language, the same dispositions, the same spirit, are all to be had and evinced the same everywhere. Truthfulness and consistency demand this much. It should not be that men distinguish in you several men, the man of the pulpit, the man of the ministry, the man of society, etc.; that you seem to be a man of contradictions, with the hands of Esau and the voice of Jacob. *Assuesce unicus esse*, says St. Ambrose.² It

¹ ST. GREG. *Epist.*, xxv, *ad Joan.*

² *De off. min.*

should be, rather, that from whatever side or aspect men behold you, they see in you only Jesus Christ having no language but His, and, therefore, but one doctrine and one way of life.

*Let not your deeds give the lie to your words, lest men hearing you silently reply within themselves: Why do you not do yourself what you counsel us? Even the dishonest can condemn avarice and unjust selfseeking. Let hands and heart of the priest approve his words.*¹

MEDITATION V.

THE PREACHER CANNOT BE TOO DEEPLY IMPRESSED WITH THE TRUTHS HE PREACHES.

FIRST POINT. Consider the divine Master during His days of preaching. What is His own preoccupation and with what does He seek to occupy the minds of His disciples? He thinks only of His Gospel, of the truths He has come to teach. As He goes on His way through town and country-side, He meets with no end of interesting things, magnificent panoramas, ancient monuments, and newer constructions. On all sides men are absorbed in

¹ ST. JEROME, *Epist.*, LII, 7.

the happenings of the times, in the edicts of the emperor, with the ministers in favor, the movements of armies, and the questions of taxation. It does not appear that the Savior gives them a thought. If He happens to speak of Caesar, it is because He has been brought to it by others and it serves His ulterior purpose of teaching His doctrine. What really fixes His attention, is the mission with which He is charged, the Church He is come to found, the Kingdom of God, to which He seeks to give form and of which He is busy gathering the subjects. His discourses are filled with the truths which men have need to know and to put in practice. Everywhere, even as in the temple, the Son of God seems to say to us: *In his quae Patris mei sunt oportet me esse.*¹ It is the same with the Apostles, especially with St. Paul whom of them we know best. Jesus Christ is the sum and substance of his preaching, quite as He is the sum of his knowledge and the very substance of his life. It is in the light of His grace and Gospel that he acts always: *In fide vivo Filii Dei.*² He forgets all else to think only of Him. It is under His influence, in His presence, and as the

¹ LUKE, II, 49.² GAL., II, 16.

organ of Christ that he speaks ever: *As from God, before God, in Christ we speak.* And is not this what the preacher should do, if he has pledged his life to the ministry of the word; and herein has he not the model to be studied, to which he must make some approach, even though it be only at intervals that he is called upon to preach, to exercise his office? If he seeks to impress souls and to produce some fruit, he must have a real grasp of the doctrine of Christ which he teaches, and he needs to be, not only convinced of, but sensibly penetrated with it all, and to have no other purpose than to convince others and to make them feel as he does, at least, and to allow neither his mind nor his heart to wander to strange things. *Haec meditare; in his esto*, is Paul's counsel to Timothy.¹ Ask the Master, then, to so penetrate you with His teachings, which you must hand on to others, that they may absorb your mind and fill your life, and that you may preach them with all your heart and with all your strength.

SECOND POINT. Consider the need of having this disposition and the means at your disposal wherewith to establish it in you.

¹ I TIM., IV, 15.

1. If you lack it, you cannot speak either interestingly or with effect. (a) How will any speaker, much less a preacher, interest an audience in a subject in which he himself seems to take no interest, to which he but half gives his attention, and of which he appears to be impressed neither with the importance, the certainty, nor the sublimity. A truth can be preached in various ways: it can be put vividly and strikingly, or expressed coldly and dully, without conviction or earnestness. Then, too, a truth, if well studied and reflected upon for some length of time and with application, being grasped clearly and its principles, proofs, and consequences seen with thoroughness, can be set forth with precision, its importance easily can be shown, and application of it can aptly be made to persons, places and times. One will, by such preparation, find just expression much easier, and a facility for natural comparison. A speaker's language will thus be vivid, animated, personal; of a nature to touch, to move, and to bend souls to one's purpose. On the contrary, a truth little thought upon, superficially grasped, has not reached one's own soul and will be treated of vaguely, superficially, in a way that is

insipid, conveying nothing whatever: the more so, if the reason for speaking at all be merely that the times or the place obliges one so to do. Language in such a case can scarcely be other than unfeeling, dull, lifeless, and aimless. Listeners, of course, will be wearied, displeased, and even scandalized. You have to fear this, because your ministry, if thus exercised, can have no other effect. The fruit you should have produced, the bringing of souls to honor and love God, is not realized. This were bad enough, but you may have done worse; you may have made the hearing of the word of God distasteful to souls, or even brought the preaching of it into contempt.

(b) And even should instructions be of the best, and exhortations be really affecting, still, they do lose something of their value if the preacher is not sensibly penetrated with them, and this because of the manner in which he will inevitably deliver them. All know or appreciate the worth of *action* in oratory. Of all the qualities of a preacher, it is the one that listeners appreciate most, and that most conduces to making an impression upon the greater number of one's audience. It is by this that men

judge of the conviction of him who speaks, and because of this it is most often that they allow themselves to be convinced. If natural and agreeable, it very often covers up real defects in the discourse itself. While if in itself imperfect and faulty, it will render the best instruction displeasing or ineffectual. But on what do the qualities of action, in a preacher, depend? On his inner dispositions, simply; on the conviction of his own mind and on the emotions of his heart. If the truths he utters scarcely affect him, if he be not penetrated with them, then he surely will lack action, or at least be faulty in his action, by way of affectation in his movements, by want of true accent in his tone and of fitness of expression, even. He will declaim, instead of speaking with real emotion, and in place of pleasing and persuading, he will only grate on the sensibilities of his hearers. But, if he have the right sentiments, if his mind and heart be as they should be, then all will appear in his exterior. All in his bearing, looks, and language will be natural, just and indicative of earnest conviction and purpose. His sincerity cannot but impress men and inspire their confidence: they will even try to enter into his sentiments and

to share in his emotions and feelings. They will not only be attracted to him by his words, but they will be stirred and prevailed upon by them. All who have written on the subject agree upon these things, and, doubtless, one's own experience and good sense attest the truth thereof. You have heard preachers enough; so, ask yourself which of them have influenced you, and why. Does not your answer bear out what we have said? You have found the best preachers to be men of conviction, of sincere, evident emotion, and even passionate; and all this you recognized, when? Was it not at the moment when you saw that they were filled with their subject, forgetful of all else, thinking only of making you to share their sentiments and of communicating their thoughts to you? The truths of faith make a very different impression, says St. Ligouri, when they, as it were, burst forth from a heart that is stirred by them, than when they merely fall from lips that respond only to sheer will and memory.

2. The next consideration is: How will the minister of the Gospel become so penetrated with the word he must preach, as to reach the hearts of his congregation and make the desired impression upon them?

Ordinarily, there is need for this of careful, active, and sufficiently long preparation. (a) To begin with, one ought to study the truth to be treated of; consider it from its various points of view, and form a right notion of its importance, its extent, its reasons, and its practical applications. To the ideas that one's own reflection may beget, it is always wise to join what can be gathered from the studies and writings of others; and, apropos of this, read only the best. *Learn well what you are to teach: learn of such as have written or spoken in accord with true doctrine, so that you may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to make answer to those who try to gainsay you therein.*¹ (b) But study will not be enough. To it must be joined meditation; one must consider the subject prayerfully, before God; view it from the standpoint of a living faith, in a truly Christian light. One must strive to grasp well the principal ideas involved, to discern and realize whatever is calculated to make them appreciated, acceptable, and appealing as practicable and to be put into practice. Of course, this is not a recommendation to make of that study a substitute for our meditation which is an exercise of

¹ JEROME, *Let.*, LII, 7.

piety. What is meant is, that these truths are to be thought upon in a spirit of prayer, and, as far as possible, contemplated in the light of God. (c) And while thinking upon these truths in order to master them, one should seek to have the sentiments for them they deserve; to venerate and to love them, for they are of God. Thus the heart will feel and appreciate what the intellect understands or grasps. And this requires no great effort, for the heart is naturally moved in proportion as the mind is enlightened: *Ex claro intellectu, nascitur non tardus effectus*, says St. Thomas.¹

THIRD POINT. Thus you understand the first condition, and the one most essential to a fruitful ministry in the pulpit. Congregations can be impressed only in so far as the preacher himself is impressed; that is, full of his subject. And this should be enough to make one understand what work, what labor is required in order to become a good preacher. Study and meditation are obligatory upon all. Apart from the Apostles and a few men whom God saw fit to enlighten in a miraculous manner, in order to give a striking assurance of His having authorized

¹ 2a-2ae, q. 188, a. 6.

their ministry, you will not find a single priest who has accomplished good work in the Church by his preaching and who has not studied much, meditated much, labored much. For, is there any other conceivable way in which to possess one's self of Christian learning, or to understand the laws of Christian life which one must preach, if he is to preach at all? Dogmatic theology, a working knowledge of Moral truths and principles (without a sure knowledge of which it is simply impossible to instruct the faithful correctly and to treat with competence the ordinary and practical matters of Catholic concern) how else are these to be mastered except by the means already mentioned? The priest ought, every Sunday, give his people some instruction according to their needs, something that may be of help to them during the week; and that means that he must give thought to his sermon during the week previous, that he can judge what he had best say, and how he shall say it. This is the way Chrysostom always occupied himself in the interval between the sermons he preached, and this, he says, kept him occupied and obliged him to forego intercourse with the world. It is the rule the Curé of Ars made for himself during

the first years of his priesthood, for he would spend whole days in his sacristy that he might think of wholesome things to say to his little flock, and find the words and the way of making these thoughts understandable and appealing. No wonder that they were as much affected and won by his words as if he had been a preacher of grand discourses. Happy the faithful to whom God has vouchsafed such a pastor: *Qui pascet eos scientia et doctrina.*¹ But happy, also, the pastors who thus prepare their sermons, who take them to heart themselves and give themselves the pains and trouble to be able to pronounce them well, and who neglect nothing that will render their utterances in the pulpit solidly profitable. Their instructions are worth all that they cost them, and the value thereof is for this life and for the next. In this life, the people are the gainers by the preacher's labors; in the other life, God will make the worthy minister of His word a magnificent and surpassing recompense. *Labor in all things, do the work of an evangelist.*² *Who sows sparingly, shall also reap sparingly.*³ But

¹ ST. JEROME, III, 15.

² II COR., IX, 6.

³ III TIM., IV, 5.

they that shall have learned, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that shall instruct many unto justice, as stars for all eternity.¹

MEDITATION VI.

THE PREACHER MUST LEARN TO BE FORGETFUL OF SELF IN THE PULPIT.

FIRST POINT. Adore Our Lord in His preaching as the model of self-effacement and of purity of intention. He does not consult His own likes or dislikes. He seeks neither His own honor, nor His own satisfaction, nor His own interests. The glory of His Father is the aim of all His discourses. To Him He refers all the homage, all the praise, all the admiring wonder that His words inspire. *My doctrine is not mine*, He says, *but His that sent Me*. "To seek human glory, to take to myself alone, apart from my Father, the esteem, the regard, the veneration of men, that would be injustice and vanity:" *If I seek my own glory, my glory is nothing.*² These sentiments of the Son of God towards His Father are the very same that the Apostles cherished towards Himself: *It is not myself that I preach*, said St. Paul, *but*

¹ DAN., XII, 3.

² JOHN, VIII, 54.

Jesus Christ crucified. "I do not aspire to being esteemed, nor do I seek after those empty, idle advantages that I might have according to the way of this world. Far from proposing myself as one perfect, and as having attained my goal, I tremble with fear lest, in preaching to others, I lose my own soul; and unceasingly I strive to make new progress along the way God has pointed out to me." And such should be the mind of every minister of the Gospel. For, if he be animated with the Spirit of God, He will not labor selfishly; nor will he trust in or count upon himself; there will be no self-complacency in him; but he will forget self, obscure his own personality, forego his own seeming private interest, his reputation even, so that he may think only of the glory of God and the welfare of His children. Beg Our Savior to put this disposition into your heart, and to so work in you by His spirit that you may be able to say after Him: *The words which I speak, I do not speak of myself.*¹ *As I hear, I judge.*² *Who speaks of himself, seeks his own glory.*³ *I seek not my own glory.*⁴

¹ JOHN, VI, 64.

² JOHN, V, 30.

³ JOHN, VII, 18.

⁴ JOHN VIII, 53.

SECOND POINT. Two good reasons can be given why the preacher should endeavor to efface self in his ministry and to have God alone in view: first, his own interests; secondly, the interests of others.

1. The chief interests of a preacher are: not to lose the reward of his labors, and to be aided powerfully by divine grace. The means to assure and secure this double advantage cannot be other than to be forgetful of self in order to think only of God and to work for Him alone. (a) God has promised to reward in heaven all that is done for His sake here below. A mere glass of water, given by a Christian to anyone soever, can bring reward in eternal glory: for all the more reason the gift of God, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, the life of grace, the hope of heaven, given by a preacher to unbelieving or sinful souls. *They who instruct others unto justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity*, says the Prophet Daniel. This recompense is assured us; but on the condition laid down by the Savior: that, in the accomplishment of this good work, we act for God and not for self, that we intend the glory of the sovereign Master and not our personal satisfaction or gratification. Heaven is given to merit, and the

only merit before God is labor done for His sake. It follows, then, that the greatest and best of works will gain us but little or no reward, if, in the doing of them, there is more thought of self than of God; and most certainly, reward there will be none at all, if in our ministry God has had no place in our thoughts for that they were wholly taken up with ourselves. It is to works of this latter sort that St. Augustine has applied these words: *Magni passus sed extra viam. Amen dico vobis: receperunt mercedem suam, vani vanam.*¹ (b) If this mindfulness of God and forgetfulness of self are necessary to a certain degree in order to merit future rewards, the same condition holds quite as truly and as essentially for the obtaining of the assistance of divine grace while now we are laboring. Our Lord has promised His aid to His ministers: *For He Himself hath said: I will not desert you, nor leave you to yourselves.*² *I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you may bring forth fruit, and that your fruit may endure.*³ There can be no doubt of His faithfulness to His word. But why, for what end has he promised us

¹ *In Psal., cxvii, Serm. 12.*

² *HEB., xiii, 5.*

³ *JOHN, xiii, 16.*

the aid of His grace? For this reason and end alone, that we, as the Apostles, may continue His work and promote His glory. If we have other aims, if we labor for our own gain and not for His, then He owes us nothing and we have nothing whatever to expect of Him. He says: *Who shall have glorified Me, him will I glorify.*¹ And He has also said, in quite as plain words: *I will not give My glory to another.*²

2. The interests of souls, no less than our own, demand that we be entirely forgetful of self in our preaching; for if we have not for our only purpose the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful, we shall inevitably fall into various defects, either in the composition itself of our discourses or in the delivery of them, which defects will prevent our hearers from deriving much if any real good from our utterances. Even, it is scarcely too much to say that the defects of preachers, with but few exceptions, come from this one cause; and yet, they can all be precluded against simply by a pure and right intention. Thus, for example: (a) *Timidity, human respect.* There are such as seem to be somewhat

¹ I REG., II, 30.

² ISAI., XLII, 8.

ashamed of the Gospel they preach, who hardly dare to preach the great mysteries of religion, who think they must temper the utterances of the Savior in offering them to the faithful. What is it that keeps them silent, or makes them afraid? Personal considerations. They fear to be taxed with exaggeration, with ill-considered zeal, fanaticism. They give more thought to themselves than to Jesus Christ and His members. (b) *Pretentiousness*. Not a few preach with affectation and pompously. They declaim rather than speak as one announcing the Gospel. They affect unusual subjects, a solemn style, loftiness of thought. And men declare them stilted, stiff, pretentious. Why all this? Because they do not wish to be thought ordinary, preachers of the commoner sort; they want to be spoken of as eloquent, and they want to impress people with their talent: *Non appetunt erudire, sed ostendere*.¹ (c) *Ill temper*. This it is that moves a pastor to invective, vehement and ill-advised, against some disorderly doing in the parish, or against a scandal that he cannot better. It is not so much that his love of God makes him feel keenly the offense, as that he

¹ ST. GREG., *In Job.* XXIX, 2.

rankles with resentment because his ministry or rather his personal authority has been set at naught. *Vae nubibus pluentibus hujusmodi imbres, quae lutum faciunt, fructum non afferunt.*¹ (d) *Personalities.* The same explains why a preacher seeks to assert his own personality, to speak of himself, and to make himself talked of commendably. It is the same also that brings to his lips words of censure, fault-finding, malicious and spiteful allusions to others and, often enough, against his colleagues and superiors. It is ever selfishness, personal interest, an unacknowledged feeling of jealousy, petty rivalry, or even revenge. And the remedy of these faults, is? Detachment from self, renouncing the esteem of others, willingness to forego domineering, conscious superiority of any kind. In a word, *forgetfulness of self that one may think of God and of the souls of men.* With such a disposition one will never think to harm, to censure, offensively signal out anyone at all. One will speak with simplicity, with sincerity, and with piety; having nothing in thought or word but what is becoming and natural; gestures and style of speech will then be consistent with

¹ ST. BER., *In Cant.*, XXII.

these, and, even though one may not deliver himself of wonderful utterances, still he will know how to speak the truths of God, to convey them to men, to tell the faithful things that are wholesome for them to hear and are calculated to edify, to do good unto the Church, the mystical body of Christ Our Lord. He will thus help to make God known and will win souls to His service.

THIRD POINT. O my God, I begin to feel the need of my dying to self and of ridding myself of wilful inclination to self-seeking, if I am to preach worthily Your word. But how am I to undo what is so natural in me, and relieve my soul of the encumbrances of selfishness. *Nolumus expoliari, sed supervestiri*, says the Apostle.¹ Your graces, Your virtue, and Your gifts of life and light I would readily accept; but to renounce self, suppress humor, forego and mortify inclinations, I am not so ready to do these. How shall I ever yield to You, unless You do it in me and for me, Lord Jesus, You who alone can work this prodigy. *Not I, but the grace of my God within me.*² Do then, Christ Jesus, for me, and for all called to this ministry of preaching, what You have

¹ II COR., v, 4.

² I COR., xv, 10.

been pleased to do for the Apostles. Deliver us from the spirit of selfishness; from our self-assertion, from our own will and way. *Auferes spiritum eorum et deficient, et in pulverem suum revertentur*, says Your prophet. You will give them Your own spirit to animate them, to be the soul and inspiration of their labors; *Emittes spiritum tuum et creabuntur*. You will make of them new creatures wholly spiritual, men after Your own heart, and through them You will renew the face of the earth; *Creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terrae*. And we, my God, shall cease to be always thinking of self and to act only for self. When we shall speak from Your altar, Your Spirit will speak by our lips, and He will speak through us as He spoke through Your Apostles and through Your Son, with the same purity of word and of intention, with the same accent of truth, with the same power. *Si quis loquitur, quasi sermones Dei, ut in omnibus honorificetur Deus per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.*¹

Purpose that henceforth you will mortify, in so far as you may, both self-seeking and human respect. Recite with attention always the *Veni Sancte Spi-*

¹ PET. IV, 11.

ritus, that you may obtain of The Spirit of God, that He will possess your heart and establish His rule over it for time to come.

MEDITATION VII.

CHARITY IS THE SOUL OF PREACHING.

FIRST POINT. Our Lord, like His Father, is charity itself. His mysteries and His works are witnesses to us of His tender love; but it is His preaching, more than all these, that makes us understand it: through mercy He became like us, and through love He entered into communion with men and became our teacher. Though infinitely holy and possessing in His soul all the light of Heaven, He did not disdain to treat with us sinners. Our weaknesses and our waywardness moved Him to pity and He calls all to Him, sinners and sinless, that He may instruct and sanctify us. "*Come to Me*, He bids us, *come ye all to Me and I will refresh ye. Be My disciples and keep My counsels.* You will then come to know that I am meek and humble of heart, and that I desire only your happiness. Do I not know well enough that justice is not of this world and that no one can be justified but through Me? Wherefore, do I deal with the worst of sinners as a

good father with an unruly child, and as the most devoted of shepherds with the strayed sheep of his flock. O Jerusalem, didst thou but know the things that are to thy peace! Didst thou but understand wherein thy true well-being lies! How often have I called thy children to Me, that I might nestle them in warmth and safety, close to My Sacred Heart. And they would not; they would not come to Me that they might have life." Thus Our Savior speaks, in words that He alone can utter. And the whole Gospel breathes the same spirit of tender love and mercy. So, too, the writings of all the Apostles. In reading them one feels that the first ministers of the Gospel had but one heart with the divine Master. Study St. Paul, the most energetic and the most ardent of all. There is no expression, no comparison, no figure of speech he can find that seems adequate to tell of the love he has for those he has begotten in Christ. He calls upon Jesus to witness the solicitude he feels and the prayers and supplications he makes for their growth in perfection. He calls them his joy, his glory, his crown, his very life. His affection for them is more tender than a father's: *As a nurse should cherish her children.*¹ *My*

¹ I THESS., II, 7.

*little children, of whom I am in labor again.*¹ No matter what the grief they caused him, nor what the reproof he felt obliged to administer them, he always spoke kindly, and never did he show his indignation, unless to the obstinate enemies of His Master. Ask Our Lord to give you something of this spirit of tenderness and charity. Without this how can you ever be a representative of the Savior and a minister of His word? You would not even be truly one of His disciples: *By this will men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another.*²

SECOND POINT. Charity is the soul of preaching. It is the most effective means, the indispensable condition of doing good.

1. *The most efficacious means.* The Savior's yoke is imposed on no one. Each one must decide to take it upon himself, it is to be assumed and borne freely. *Tollite jugum meum super vos*, is the Master's invitation.³ And how shall the priest persuade the faithful to accept it? By showing them that it is the better part, that their perfection and their welfare depend upon it, and that, in acting otherwise, they but do harm to themselves and heap up regrets unto a later

¹ GAL., IV, 19.

² JOHN, XII, 35.

³ MAT., XI, 29.

day. Preaching has no purpose but to bring souls to accept the yoke of Christ; and a preacher has done all that is of most importance to do when he has instilled into the hearts of the faithful a conviction of the wisdom of heeding Christ's invitation. But what is there can give to his words of persuasion the authority needed to dissipate their doubts, to put an end to their hesitation and misgivings, and to constrain them, as it were, to make up their minds efficaciously and irrevocably upon this question that all are inclined, it would seem by nature, ever to leave to indecision? Above all, to help him there is the confidence that he may inspire in their hearts, the assurance they may have that he really desires to promote their well-being, that he exhorts them only through zeal and affection, through devotion to the interests of their souls. If they come to realize that it is the charity of Christ that inspires him, they can hardly turn a deaf ear to the Gospel he preaches or to the counsels he gives them. Would you, then, gain the confidence of those to whom you must preach, and make sure of bringing them to accept the doctrine you preach them? If so, show them, make it clear to them that you have love for their souls, that it is charity that speaks in you, that

you are as sincerely desirous of their welfare and happiness as of your own. Let everything about you witness to the sincerity of this sentiment. Your language, above all, let it be the language of a father and of a friend, rather than that of a teacher or a task-master. So doing you will find the way to men's hearts and fill them with the sentiments of your own heart. One does not withstand long him whom one loves, or him by whom one is loved. St. Augustine knew the truth of this. "What won me at first, was the affection Ambrose showed me. I had never been his disciple at all, had he not first been to me a father and a friend. I began to love him, not as a teacher of the truth, but as a man kind to me."¹

2. A priest that has not charity in his heart, or, even, that cannot make it appear in his words, will never do great good by his ministry of preaching. Though he have extraordinary talent, be he ever so well instructed or eloquent beyond his fellows; having an understanding of the mysteries of God together with a faith that can withstand all trial, he will still lack, none the less, the most essential means whereby to reach the hearts of men and win them to God: *If I*

¹ CONFESS., v, 13.

speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and if I should know all mysteries and have all knowledge and all faith, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.¹

The young and inexperienced are apt to imagine that what does good in the pulpit is eloquence, or learning, or talent, beauty of style, fine qualities of voice and even the bearing and manner of the speaker. But this illusion does not last for long, because one is not slow to realize that a preacher may well have all these qualities, estimable as they are, and yet accomplish no great good for God or man. Cultured minds admire talent, they praise rhetorical finish, and they will applaud eloquence; but they give their confidence only to charity. Before undertaking to amend their lives, to turn to God, to humble and humiliate themselves, they want a priest that is humble, compassionate, sympathetic, charitable; who loves his fellows for God's sake and who seeks only to lead them to God. A sinner finds it well and good that his conversion should give joy to a priest's heart; but he doesn't like that one should make a trophy of him. A truly pious soul is glad to have a director who will help it to the practice of a truly Christian life, but, it does not want to find

¹ I COR., XIII, 1.

in him a master who is domineering and who would use it to his own purposes. There sat in the chair of Moses, during the days of Christ, Doctors of the Law who delivered fine discourses and preached excellent maxims. But it was not to them that they went who felt an earnest and sincere desire to give themselves to God; Zachaeus, Magdalen, the young rich man, all solicited by grace. It was to Jesus: to Jesus, meek and humble, the friend of penitent sinners. He would be found always the same. No good is ever done to sinners except by merciful compassion, by encouragement, by affection. Yes, and even the most perfect souls have this weakness, that they yield and bend only to kindness and confide only in affection. *Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath,*¹ prayed St. Vincent de Paul; and St. Francis de Sales: "I love rather the preaching that is full of tender pity for the sinner than of indignation against sinfulness."

THIRD POINT. My God, if You will that I be, as a priest, of some use to the souls of my fellow-men, a preacher of Your Gospel who will reach, convert, and sanctify them, put then, I pray You, into my heart that sincere, supernatural charity of which Your Apostle

¹ PSL., VI, 2.

Paul has told us so beautifully; that charity which is kind, patient, is not puffed up, that seeketh not its own, that envieth not, that thinketh no evil. Let it animate all my words as well as my deeds. Let me never forget the goodly advice of one of Your holy Doctors: *We can no more reach the hearts of men without kindness, than the heart of God without faith.* Divine Savior, You Whose Sacred Heart was so tender and Whose discourses were ever so touching and appealing, pour into my soul the unction of Your Spirit, that my words may be somewhat like to Your own. I would wish to be able to say with You: *I have compassion on the multitude.* Teach me to speak Your language, the language of charity and of zeal, the accent of compassion and kindliness. For then, I can hope to draw souls to You, and not fear estrange them; I shall help those fallen by the wayside, instead of being a stumbling block to any by my fault. Then, I shall bring them to love Your yoke and Your service and teach them to go forward right contentedly in the way of Your virtues.

Take for your model of charity, says St. Augustine, the divine Master Himself, as you know Him in the Gospels: and, with this divine model, you will do well

to take also St. Francis of Sales, in whom He has been pleased to give us so especial a likeness of His own meekness of heart. You can read and study with profit to your soul and to your ministry, his life, his sermons, his writings; for they will prompt you to emulation.

MEDITATION VIII.

THE MORE HOLY THE PREACHER THE MORE EFFECTIVE HIS MINISTRY.

FIRST POINT. Adore Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saint of saints and the preacher par excellence. To preach His Gospel and to exhort His disciples to virtue, He had not to change at all His usual dispositions: He had only to manifest the thoughts that ever occupied His mind and the sentiments that were always in His Sacred Heart. Thus are His discourses so natural. We understand thereby the simplicity and the aptness in His language. *And all were in admiration at the words of grace that came forth from His mouth.¹ And all the people were very attentive to hear Him.² And they said: Never did man speak as this man.³* The Apostles, called to continue His ministry, conformed

¹ LUKE, IV, 22.

² LUKE, XIX, 48.

³ JOHN, VII, 46.

their way of life to His and the fruit of their labors corresponded to their faithfulness and exactness therein; that is, to their sanctity. They felt at a loss how to return thanks to their Master for the blessings He bestowed upon their labors: *Benedictus Deus, qui nos benedixit in omni benedictione spirituali!* says St. Paul.¹ *For I dare not speak of any of those things that Christ worketh not by me for the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.*² If you look into the story of holy priests who have, since the Apostles, exercised most worthily and gloriously the same ministry, you will remark that all combined work with virtue, and that their success has been according to the perfection of their lives. They have worked conversions and brought souls to holiness in the measure that they were void of selfishness and full of the Spirit of their divine Master. Their example should be enough to convince you that those who accept the ministry of preaching ought to make their lives holy, first of all, and that they should apply to themselves especially the words of Our Savior to His Apostles at the Last Supper: *Abide in Me. Who abides in Me, the same beareth much fruit. If anyone*

¹ EPH., I, 3.

² ROM., xv, 18.

*abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither.*¹

SECOND POINT. Why is it that the priests who are holy in life, as well as in character, accomplish most good? It is simply because they combine in a considerable degree those things that contribute to effective preaching: zeal, true eloquence, and the assistance of God's grace.

1. *Zeal*, the very soul of the apostolate and of preaching. One cannot be anything of the true apostle nor a real preacher, if one be not simply full of zeal; but one is filled with it only if he is a true priest, a man of God, devoted to His Lord. For, what is zeal, supernatural zeal, I mean, a priest's zeal? It is the love of God in a surpassing degree, it is the sort of charity that is *ardens*. But charity and holiness are inseparable. The more a priest is holy, the more is his heart warmed and fired by charity, the more does he resemble the Apostles, and the more capable does he become of carrying on their work. You recall under what form the Holy Spirit descended upon them on the day of Pentecost: *In cloven tongues of fire*. "These tongues of fire indicated, says St. Gregory the Great, the mar-

¹ JOHN, XV, 4.

velous effects that divine grace was going to produce through the Apostles. By the tongues is shown to us that those whom the Holy Spirit has filled He hath made at once ardent and eloquent." As a matter of fact, they did begin to preach immediately, and marvelously, and they communicated to souls forthwith the same light and fervor with which they had just been endued: *Coeperunt loqui magnalia Dei*. And all apostolic men are formed in quite the same way. There is no other way whereby to become apostolic. To communicate the Spirit of God, one needs to have It himself first and in abundance: *Qui non ardet non incendit*. He who has but natural reason as the source of his inspiration, never is zealous, he remains cold and soon loses heart and interest, and his language, likewise, is never ardent, impetuous, nor has it ever anything of the ardor of an apostle. "Why is it," says St. Theresa, "that so many priests do so little good by their preaching? It is this, that human wisdom does not disappear in them as it disappeared from among the Apostles in that great flame of divine love that found its way to their hearts." If they would but become saintly and men of God, they would speak with the tongues of saints and of men of God. The

Spirit of God would animate them. He would enlighten their minds and warm their hearts within them: *Facit ministros suos flammam ignis.*¹

2. A zealous man, a priest after God's own heart, has all that can make his words touch and persuade. Nor has he any need to strive after eloquence: it comes to him, it is, as it were, second nature or natural to him to be eloquent. He can not well be otherwise. For nothing is more natural, on the one hand, than to set forth in a vivid manner that which one grasps clearly, or to impart to, or inspire in others a sentiment that has deeply penetrated one's own being: and, on the other hand, there is no one who has a more perfect or truer understanding of revealed truths and who is more affected by them, than men of God; they who are habitually in union of thought and affection with the Spirit of God, who are enlightened by His understanding and animated with His charity. *Who believeth in Me*, says the Master, *from within him shall flow rivers of living water.*² Faith, without doubt, can be of various degrees, and the priest who scarcely does more than adhere to Christian truths in general, without giving them study in detail or trying to let or to

¹ HEB., I, 7.

² JOHN, VII, 38.

make them penetrate his soul, will of course be able to talk on them, even at length; but, he will not present them in such wise that they will make any sort of deep or lasting impression on anyone. It will, as necessarily, be quite otherwise with the priest whose belief in the truths of faith is lively and strong, who feels what he believes, who has that degree of faith which Jesus asks of His Apostles when He says to them: *Have the faith of God.*¹ *You believe in God, believe also in Me.*² Such an one beholds and realizes the truths of faith. They are for him present, living realities. He is touched, convinced, compelled by them. He is not of those who seem to speak of things that it has not entered into their hearts to conceive, or who have learned what they utter by hearsay. He does not have to search for words, he is never lost for expression; words come naturally to his lips out of the abundance of his heart. And the words that come from the heart are winged and make upon the heart of one's hearers an impression quite other than that made by words taken from books and spoken only from the lips: for they awake always an echo in the hearts of listeners. And let no one think that the lay

¹ MARK, XI, 21.

² JOHN, XIV, 1.

folk do not discern the difference. They recognize it at the very outset. *The lamb born but today knows the bleating of its dame*, says a pious writer: and the merest child of God knows the accent of the Spirit of God; he will never mistake for His word the voice of human wisdom: *Qui ex Deo est verba Deia udit*.¹ And it is to the voice of the Spirit he lends a willing ear, to its counselings he submits, to its suggestions he yields, abandons himself. All others leave him insensible or inspire distrust: *Non novit vocem alienorum*.²

3. Assuredly, everyone can implore grace, and all prayer is of avail before the throne of God; but who are they who ordinarily pray the best, and whom God hears more readily? Are they not His more worthy ministers, they who, laboring to fulfil His purposes with humility and fervor, represent to Him the need they have of His help in the very accomplishment of His will: *But if a man be a server of God, and doth His will, him He heareth*.³ And are not these the very ones that are most given to prayer? Ordinary souls, but little advanced on the way of perfection, pray indeed occasionally, when they feel themselves in need. The

¹ JOHN, VIII, 47.² JOHN, X, 5.³ JOHN, IX, 31.

saints never have done with praying; because they never cease to feel their helplessness and the thought of divine mercy is always with them. And, furthermore, they can rest their pleas to God upon the merits of their lives, on their sacrifices, on their works of penance, on their labors. The efficacy of their prayer is as assured as their assiduity therein. Yet, this is not saying enough. We must recall that the earnest, holy priest is never alone, and, that while he spends himself in labor for God, the Holy Spirit works together with him. Our Savior abides in him quite otherwise than in the ordinary faithful soul. He reigns there truly, He lives there, and His action upon and in that soul is sensible. A holy cleric is not merely the abode, or the throne of the Savior: he is His organ, and a most active one: *Do you seek a proof that Christ speaketh in me?* asked St. Paul of the Corinthians.¹ There are some priests whose very presence is a reminder of God, and one cannot approach them without feeling a sentiment of veneration. There is something that surrounds them, that radiates from them, as supernatural and as sensible as the halo set by the artist on the brow of a saint. This explains why, in

¹ II COR., XIII, 3.

hearing them, one seems to be listening to the Spirit Himself, and that one never thinks or has even a notion of resisting them. This explains, too, the extraordinary impressions and the prodigies of grace produced by certain preachers, St. Francis, for example, St. Dominic, St. Vincent Ferrer. They had no peculiar doctrine to preach. Often, they said but little, and with little art; they changed stout and stubborn hearts, nevertheless; they made hearts burn within the bosoms of men, they worked untold conversions. The Blessed de Montfort had only to look upon the faithful assembled before him and show them the crucifix, to move them even to tears. And we priests, if we but had a goodly share of their virtue, of their priestliness, not only would we speak otherwise than we do now, but even the self-same words we now utter would have so different, so new a power! Let them, then, be our models henceforth. We shall study their lives, and shall take to heart their maxims. That will be well done; but let us, more than all, let us get their spirit, practise their virtues, purify our lives and become holy as they: then all will be quite different; for us and for Holy Church.

THIRD POINT. *First be sanctified and then sanc-*

*tify, become enlightened and thereafter enlighten others;*¹ here is the right method of procedure, the only one that leads anywhere. Those who follow any other, little realize the wrong they do themselves and others. For they make it more their study to know, than to live well, so that many often err and do but little or no good.² Priests, for the most part, will know only in the life to come, the amount of good they might have accomplished if they but had confidence in divine grace and if only they had been generous in the service of Christ. Lord Jesus, penetrate me with the conviction that preaching is no profane occupation, nor a work of mere man, but a supernatural function and a work of grace; that, to acquit myself well of it, I must live in union with You and under the influence of Your Spirit, and that they who exercise it with most fruit are the same who love You most and who are most truly Yours. Give me grace also, Lord Jesus, to prepare myself for my ministry by applying myself to making the much needed advance in the way of perfection, and to grow in virtue and knowledge, learn-

¹ ST. GREG. NAZ., *De Sacerd.*

² *Imit.* I, 3, IV.

ing the language of Your Spirit the while. In becoming a holy priest, I am sure to become one of Your worthy organs and prophets, and I shall glorify You wherever I may be; in the pulpit as at the altar or in the sacred tribunal: *Idoneos facit ministros Novi Testamenti non littera sed spiritus.*¹

“Of far more worth is what renders the instrument supple and docile to the action of God, as humility, contempt of the world, purity of intention, than what disposes it to act of itself, as learning or eloquence. A man of ordinary learning yet of great virtue is a better workman in the service of the Savior than a man of much learning but of ordinary virtue.”²

¹ II COR., III, 6.

² ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA, *Thoughts*.

PART V.
INSTRUCTIONS ON MAJOR ORDERS.

THE PRIESTHOOD.

ARTICLE I.

*Ordination, Powers and Functions of the
Priesthood.*

I.

WHAT THE PRIESTHOOD IS.

The priesthood is the first and most excellent of Orders, the episcopate excepted. With the power to offer the divine Sacrifice, and to confer all the sacraments except that of the Orders, it gives to those who receive it, the graces of which they have need for the worthy exercise of their holy functions.

The inferior Orders are so many steps one must take to arrive at the priesthood. The powers and the graces received with these various dignities are a sharing in, or are of the elements of the power and grace of the priesthood; in this wise that, if one were

ordained to the priesthood all at once, without having led up to it by the several degrees of the lesser Orders, he would still enjoy all the powers of the inferior ministers; and, in the supposition that he had placed no obstacle to the efficacy of the sacrament in so violating the law which requires that Orders be received distinctly and gradually, he could have also the very same graces.

There is no power given to man that approaches that of the priesthood. It is a considerable thing, assuredly, to expel the demon or to partake as exorcist in the dominion of the Savior over His enemies. It is a grand thing to be the light of souls and to impart knowledge to the faithful, as Acolytes do when they begin upon the duties of their office. Yet, it is a thing infinitely more grand, a marvel that eclipses all others, to remit sins, to bring grace to the souls of the faithful, to offer to the divine Majesty the Body and Blood of the Man-God.¹ It is to hold in one's hands the salvation of the entire world; it is to have in one's possession the treasure of Heaven; it is to render to the infinite Sovereignty of God a

¹ Consecrandi, filii dilectissimi, in presbyteratus officium, illud digne suscipere ac susceptum laudabiliter exequi studeatis. Sacerdotem enim oportet offerre, benedicere, præesse, prædicare et baptizare. Pontif., *De Presbyt.*

homage more glorious than the adoration of all angels and saints.

And what else was the great dignity and function of the Son of Man, but the priesthood? When His Father willed to honor Him according to His merit and to bestow upon Him a title in keeping with His grandeur, He did not say: "Thou art a king; rule over the universe;" He said to Him: "Thou art a priest, and forever." Jesus Christ could exercise no more glorious function, nor have a dignity more high, for none there is having an object more august or a purpose more sublime. Now the priesthood that is conferred upon us by ordination is the very priesthood of Jesus Christ. Between His powers and ours, His functions and ours, there is not merely a similitude: there is identity. It is the same victim Who is immolated by Himself and by ourselves; it is the same sacrifice; 'tis the same grace that comes of it: *Sacerdos alter Christus*. Hence it is that the priest does not speak in his own name during the divine oblation, nor in the conferring of the sacraments, but in the name of the Savior, forming, as it were, with Him but one person: *Ego te baptizo; Ego te absolvo; Hoc est corpus meum; Hic est sanguis meus*.

Were the Son of God still on earth fulfilling the same functions of the priest in a visible manner, He would speak no differently.¹

The episcopate has indeed a real superiority over the priesthood and the power of a bishop is much more extensive than that of the simple priest. Our Lord would have it so. It was His will that there be hierarchical subordination among His ministers, and that, both as regards character and jurisdiction, the priesthood be inferior to the episcopate. Nevertheless, if we limit ourselves to the consideration of the power of Orders only, we shall see that in this, which is the principal thing, that of bishops differs but little from that of priests and that the latter have what the former possess in a more excellent way.

¹ Dominus noster Jesus Christus e terris ascensurus in cœlos, sacerdotes sui operis vicarios reliquit. Conc. Trid., Sess. xiv, 5. Quid nobilius quam assimilari Filio Dei! St. BERN., *Stimul. amoris*, II, 6. Quantam dignitatem contulit eis Deus! Sicut enim non Angelos sed semen Abrahæ apprehendit ad faciendam redemptionem, sic non angelis sed hominibus, solisque sacerdotibus corporis ac sanguinis sui commisit consecrationem. *In Synod.* Absit ut de his quidquam sinistrum loquar qui, apostolico gradu succedentes, Christi corpus sacro ore conficiunt, per quos et nos christiani sumus, qui claves regni cœlorum habentes quodammodo ante iudicis diem judicant, qui sponsam Domini sobria castitate conservant. St. HIERON., *Epist.* xiv, 8.

“What is there that bishops do,” says St. Jerome, “that priests cannot also do, save the ordaining of sacred ministers?” They have above the priest scarcely more than the power of communicating their priesthood: a sublime power no doubt, but one which derives all its grandeur from the priesthood itself.

II.

MUST NOT THE DIGNITY OF THE PRIEST BE SUSTAINED BY HOLINESS OF LIFE?

Of this there can be no question; for, the character of the priest being itself holy, eminently so, demands of him that is honored with it a corresponding sanctity. To exercise worthily this office, one needs to have a degree of virtue such as it would not be right to require on the same terms from the simple faithful or inferior ministers.

1. It is of course, out of the question to think of adducing here the multitude of texts from the Scripture and instances in tradition that inculcate the conviction that priests are under obligation of being men of holy lives. Such attestations are without

number. If anyone wish to see an abridged collection of them, let him read any of the better known works either of the holy Doctors or of other spiritual writers on the priesthood: The treatise of St. Chrysostom, *De Sacerdotio*; that of Molina, on the same subject; the compilation by Horstius, entitled: *Septem tubae sacerdotales*; *Regula Cleri*, by Tronson; etc. Let us here make only a few observations. (a) There is no point in all Moral on which one can find so unanimous a teaching, more energetic convictions or more striking considerations. (b) One would do wrong to challenge the assertions of worthy men on this point or to cry exaggeration. For, over and above the fact that their teaching is well founded in the Scriptures and the constant practice of the Church, one must never forget that they who gave us this doctrine, have been raised up by God for our instruction in the truths of salvation, that the greater number of them, being privileged with the honor of the priesthood, have reflected maturely on its duties and been careful not to overstate or to be rigorists, and finally, that the reputation they enjoy is founded on the merits of their writings as much as

on the greatness of their virtues.¹ (c) They are not more exacting with regard to us than are the simple faithful. People of the world themselves are of the persuasion that priests are obliged to set the example of virtue, and that the life of the ministers of God ought to be much more perfect than their own. Hence the respect they have for us, the confidence they place in us, their readiness and even eagerness to defend us against any disparaging or dishonorable imputation, and, in fine, the scandal occasioned when a priest is known to be subject to the same weakness as ordinary men, to take the same licenses, and to be guilty of the same falls.²

2. Were authority lacking, reason would suffice to convince us that God must exact of His priests a life more holy according as their relations with Him

¹ An volumus docere doctorem? An sapientiores illo sumus et Spiritu carnis inflamur adversus eum quem æterni Dei testem nobilis cruor et clarissimæ passionis corona produxit? Quid tot annosi Episcopi, tot martyres, tot confessores? St. PACIAN., *Epist.* III.

² A region, says Blanc de St. Bonnet, is always a degree lower in virtue than its clergy. A saintly clergy brings up a virtuous people; a virtuous clergy produces but a fair congregation; a clergy made up of merely honorable men would turn out an impious people.

are more intimate and as the sanctification of their fellow men depends the more on theirs.

(a) What intimacy of dealing could be greater than that of the priest with the three divine Persons? —With the Father. The priest is the chief minister of sacred worship. His ordinary occupation is to show honor to God and to make Him honored of the faithful. Each hour he offers the divine Majesty new homage and new supplications. If his heart be not pure, if his soul be not a sanctuary to God, of what avail are these praises and prayers? *Non est speciosa laus in ore peccatoris.*¹ *Sanctify thyself; be set apart as the sacred phials and as the thurible reserved to the uses of the temple and the worship of God.*² “The soul of a priest should be in his body,” says Father Olier, “as the perfume that lingers in an empty censer.”³—With the Son. In the Sacrament of the Altar, the priest is not only His adorer; he is His guardian and all but His master. He possesses Him as his treasure. He disposes of the Blessed Sacrament as having a certain right of jurisdiction. He offers and immolates Him therein in sacrifice both for him-

¹ ECOLI., xv, 9.

² *Holy Orders.*

³ ORIG., *In Levit., Hom. xi.*

self and for his brethren. He receives Him as his very nourishment, and proffers or dispenses Him as food to such as he deems worthy. What union, think you, can be more close, and, by consequence, what obligation more strict of living in the friendship of the Savior?—With the Holy Ghost. It is by the lips of the priest that the Spirit of God instructs the children of the faith, exhorts them, justifies them. It is by his hands that He blesses them, distributes to them His graces, works unto their salvation. The priest is His official organ in the governing of souls. And ought not the instrument be the exclusive belonging of Him that must always use it, and be wholly devoted to the function for which it was made and is employed? Thus each of the Three Persons, by virtue of the relations they deign to have with the priest, imposes upon him the obligation of being a holy man.

(b) The perfection of the faithful depends essentially on that of the priest. Why? Because it is through the priest that the Almighty has chosen to make the members of the Church holy and pleasing to Him, and because the priest can contribute to this work only in so far as he is what God wants him

to be. "The priest," says St. Bernard, "owes three things to the soul entrusted to his care: instruction, example and prayer. Instruction first; he is to teach them the law of God, show them the reasons they have for keeping from sin, for practising virtue and for doing something by way of advance in perfection. It follows from this that he must give them the example, that he lead the way, that he encourage and sustain their faltering and diffident footsteps, that he reassure them of the safety and easiness of the road by showing them how difficulties may be surmounted. Their weakness in virtue means he must be strong therein, if he is to be their aid. And he must help them, too, by asking God's assistance, not only at the Altar, in the recitation of the breviary and in the administration of the Sacraments, but even at all times and moments by a continual and interior supplication, asking for the succor they must needs have to overcome temptation, to triumph over themselves and to respond to the inspirations of heaven. Now, if these things are duties for the priest, if zeal is needed to address himself to them and if grace in no ordinary measure must initiate and second his efforts to fulfil his duty,

what other conviction can be borne in upon us than that a priest must be holy of life, united to God and docile to His Holy Spirit? A priest of layman's faults and failings ought to be ashamed to preach the virtues he himself neglects; and if he preach them out of necessity, conviction, ardor and enlightenment will scarcely appear in his utterances. It is sadder still to contemplate the effect his words will have if men recognize that they give the lie to his own example. It is a fact of experience that men give ear to or take to heart what is said by those whom they think to be sincere, and they hold to be sincere only such as live the maxims they teach others.¹ Lastly, it is certain that the prayers of a priest, his personal prayers, weigh with God only in proportion as he personally is pleasing to God, that is, according as he is priestly in mind and heart, virtuous and fervent. The sound of his voice or the moving of lips count for nothing of themselves. It is the heart

¹ Such it behooves ministers of God to be; serious, prudent, pious, above reproach, without stain, so that whosoever shall observe them may be impressed, and declare in admiration: "These men are indeed of God whose conversation and life and behavior is such." ST. AUGUSTINE, *De vita Christ.*, 9.

alone that God considers. If the heart is His, if it is full of faith, of charity, of trust, God answers its supplications with all the goodness of a Father; but if he find it cold to Him, insensible and indifferent, how or why should he be touched by mere words or be pleased to grant desires so ill or so undesirably expressed? The priest, then, must understand that he will be useful to souls only if he is virtuous, and in the proportion that he is virtuous. To make souls pure and holy, as to do honor to God, it simply must be that one have the sanctity of his calling, or at least be zealous for it.

III.

DOES A FIRM RESOLVE TO SET ABOUT ONE'S SANCTIFICATION SUFFICE TO WARRANT ONE'S TAKING THE PRIESTHOOD UPON HIMSELF, AS IT DOES FOR ENTERING THE MONASTIC LIFE?

No one pretends that it is necessary to be absolutely perfect before becoming a priest. Absolute perfection is not for creatures; and besides, no one knows what is the highest degree to which man can attain. On the other hand, the desire or purpose to become better and the will to sanctify self more

and more are in every state the essential elements of all holiness of life. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that these suffice to make one fit for the priestly character. Together with this desire and this will which look to the future, there is needed in the present, actually, a certain well determined measure of virtue; of virtue already acquired. Herein is one of the differences, indicated by writers on the spiritual life, between the priestly and the religious state. As one becomes a religious in order to sanctify himself, and as this state has as its peculiar purpose to make more holy such as embrace it, it is enough on entering a religious order to have a firm resolve to abide there, working the while at one's sanctification with the means that the community affords and prescribes its subjects. But it is not merely to sanctify self, it is also to sanctify others and to promote the glory of God, that men become priests. In receiving the sacerdotal character, one assumes the obligation of exercising the most holy of functions, of celebrating the most august mysteries, of teaching the faithful the practice of every Christian virtue, of giving them the example and of procuring the grace of the same. And for this a firm purpose or a mo-

ment of fervor is not enough; solid virtue above the ordinary is necessary. All are agreed on this, theologians as well as spiritual writers.¹

And what is the degree of perfection required of one who would be promoted to priesthood, and when can one know that he has attained to it? To this question we can make no other answer than that we we have already given for the preceding Orders. It is impossible to determine the degree with precision. For one sees so many great servants of God who deemed themselves unfit for this honor, and therefore it would seem little in keeping with modesty and prudence to make a pretence of meriting it, be one's condition what it may. Wherefore, we must content ourselves with urging those who have a true vocation simply to follow these rules: 1. Leave nothing undone to profit by the graces that are proffered you, and never relax in your efforts to advance in virtue, retaining ever the persuasion that you will never have enough of holiness to grace

¹ Ad sacramentum altaris major sanctitas requiritur quam requirat etiam religionis status. *St. TH.*, 2^a 2^{ae}, q. 184, a. 8. Illi qui divinis mysteriis applicantur perfecti in virtute esse debent. *In* 4, dict. 24, q. 3. Sacerdos est in ordine perficientium, non perficiendorum. *Id.*

your ministry as it deserves, and that the more virtue is yours the more honor will you do to God and the more good to your fellow-men. 2. To ascertain when you ought or when you may present yourself for ordination, consult the appreciation of your superiors and particularly the judgment of the director of your conscience. Provided you act frankly and honestly and have revealed yourself in direction as you really have been and are, or as you honestly believe yourself, you can lay aside all doubt and fear and follow with humble confidence the way indicated you.

IV.

WHAT, ACCORDING TO THE COUNCIL OF TRENT, ARE
THE QUALITIES REQUIRED FOR THE PRIESTHOOD?

1. The Council of Trent (Session 23, ch. 14) lays down five conditions for admission to the priesthood: That all candidates have fulfilled with piety and fidelity their ministry in the preceding Orders; That testimony unquestionable of their proper conduct be had; That they have passed an entire year in deaconship, or at least that the Bishop ordain none

otherwise save in the interests of the Church; That it be made clear, in a serious examination, that they are capable of teaching the faithful the truths necessary to salvation and of administering them the Sacraments; Finally, that their piety and the purity of their morals give assurance that they will never cease to lead their brethren to virtue as well by their example as by their discourses. It will not do to pass lightly over these conditions.

(a) To be fit for advancement to the priesthood, the deacon must *have given proof of his piety in the preceding Orders*. Herein the Council confirms the teaching of ecclesiastical writers, that the application one can give to the fulfilling of the functions of any Order and the fervent practice of the virtues it calls for are the best possible way in which to prepare for higher Orders. *For they that have ministered well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and much confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*¹ Whence it is reasonable to conclude that whoever ceases to think of his promotion to an Order as soon as he has received it may well be feared for, particularly if such an one take no trouble to acquit himself

¹ I TIM., III, 13.

well of the offices of his Order, to learn and conserve its spirit, to tend to its duties.

(b) *It is necessary that good testimony be given of the Ordinand* and, by consequence, assurance that he has led an edifying life. Such cannot have been his life if, since his last ordination, he has been lax or indifferent to making progress in the spirit of his vocation, if at the seminary he has been remarked for dissipation, if during vacation time he showed no relish for anything much but idling away his time in such things as ill become one who is supposed to be of serious, not to say spiritual turn of mind, and, for all the more reason, if he abandoned altogether his practices of piety and could not keep himself in the state of grace.

(c) *He must have passed the required time in Deacon's Order, unless dispensed by the Bishop.* Apropos of which it is good to remark: That the law of interstices, wisely made by the Church, ought to apply or be applied with greater exactness to deacons for that the priesthood requires a more perfect preparation: That such dispensation is to be accorded, so says the Council, but for the good of the Church; and that, consequently, it would be wrongful and

an abuse to solicit it out of human motives or to seek it for private interest.

(d) It is required that the ordinand have been adjudged *capable of teaching the elements of the faith, of administering the Sacraments and of performing the other functions of the holy ministry.* Nothing can be more essential. And yet, does it not seem, says an ecclesiastical writer, that not enough thought is given to this? Some there are who are less struck by the need of ecclesiastical science for the attending to the duties of a priest than by the need of medical science for the practice of medicine. Whence is this? May it not be that such give thought chiefly to the present, and little or nothing to the future? Looking at matters in that light, but in that light only, it does matter less that a priest be poorly versed in the things that pertain to his ministry than that a physician lack the knowledge and skill required in his practice. A doctor ignorant and unskilled will very soon lose the confidence of his patients; but a priest may often be the better accepted and the more sought after and may have the more success, of a sort, in his ministry in the very measure that he is less careful about the proper

fulfillment of its duties. Saint Ligouri submitted all who came to him for ordination to a thorough examination in all theology. He based his practice on this rule of the Council of Trent, which decrees that all priests be capable of preaching and of administering the Sacraments.

(e) Finally, the ordinand must have such *piety* as will warrant the trust that he will edify the faithful and that he will never cease to lead them to virtue as well by his example as by his discourses. Note that in her allocutions to those whom she makes her ministers, the Church always joins holiness with science, and example with teaching. She is anxious that it may always be said of her ministers what Our Savior said of His Precursor, that he was *lucerna ardens et lucens*: ardent by the fervor of his charity; shining by the brilliance of his knowledge of the things of God and the purity of his teachings and of his example. Men of this stamp do great good to souls and all the friends of God rejoice to see themselves entrusted to the guidance of such.

2. The Pontifical is yet more express than the Council: *Cum magno timore ad tantum gradum ascendendum est; ac providendum ut coelestis sapien-*

tia, probi mores et diuturna justitiae observantia ad id electos commendent. This to those who are about to present themselves for promotion to the priesthood.

(a) *Cum magno timore.* No one should ascend without fear and trembling to the most sublime and the most perilous of all the Orders. You recall the words of St. Vincent de Paul: "Had I known what it is to be a priest, never would I have consented that a bishop impose hands upon me." Also what was said to St. Francis of Assisi, when debating whether he would present himself or not for ordination to the priesthood: "Francis, to be a priest, one must have a soul pure and shining as this crystal." When one beholds such holy men as these tremble at the thought of ordination, or withhold themselves from it for fear, must not one lament the heedless and unthinking eagerness of those who have no thought or desire or impulse but to be ordained just as soon as they can possibly be admitted to Orders, never paying heed to that which is exacted by the sanctity of God and by the laws of the Church?

(b) *Coelestis sapientia.* Before raising her deacons to sacerdotal dignity, the Church would see in them a *wisdom supernatural and altogether heavenly.*

Such wisdom as is to be drawn from the Gospel, of which they are the preachers and with which they must nourish their own souls. Yet, are they few who have received the Order of Deaconship and have never thought well on this and who have exercised their ministry without ever trying to learn or imbibe its spirit?

(c) *Probi mores*. Furthermore, the distinctive mark of one who is fit to be advanced the last step, *great purity of morals and long practice of justice*, that is, of the truly Christian virtues.¹

God wills to give all these qualities and all these dispositions to every one of His priests, for the honor of Mother Church and for the consolation of saintly souls He so much loves! *Sacerdotes tui induantur justitiam, Domine, et sancti tui exsultent.*²

¹ St. Ligouri, a man of long experience, deep learning and great zeal insists on the necessity of these dispositions. Si quis adolescens vult suscipere statum presbyteri sæcularis, confessarius non sit facilis ad annuendum sine longa et probata experientia recti finis et scientiæ vel sufficientis capacitatis. Sacerdotes enim sæculares habent eandem, imo majorem obligationem quam religiosi, et remanent in sæculi periculis. Unde ut quis bonus evadat sacerdos in sæculo, oportet ut prius egerit vitam valde exemplarem, remotam a ludis, ab otio, a pravis sociis et deditam orationi et sacramentorum frequentiæ. alioquin se ponet in statu quasi certæ damnationis. *Praxis*, 93.

² Ps., cxxxi, 9.

V.

WHY DOES THE BISHOP, EVEN AFTER HAVING RECEIVED THE GOOD TESTIMONY OF HIS ARCHDEACON CONCERNING THE ORDINANDS, ASK STILL FURTHER OF HIS CLERGY AND OF THE FAITHFUL THEIR SENTIMENTS?

The Bishop himself gives the reason for so doing, which is only what has been done since the earliest days of the Church.

1. Since the priesthood is the first and holiest of Orders, one cannot take too great precaution lest any but those of true merit be raised to it, and on whose virtue reliance can be placed. Were the Bishop content with the assurance of but one party, or if he were to refer to the advice of but a few, there could be reason to fear that he might be led into error or yield to partiality.¹

2. The faithful are much concerned that none but saintly men be ordained priests. Nothing is of more importance to them than that they have worthy clerics as their pastors, such as God wishes alone to

¹ What is sometimes unknown to many, is known to a few.
De presbyt.

have and as are fit for the ministry. As the Pontifical says, if the vessel is wrongly steered it is not only the helmsman who is lost; all those on board perish with him.¹

3. As priests must govern, instruct, exhort and sanctify the children of God, they need to enjoy their confidence and must often make appeal to, and rely on their docility. Now experience teaches that confidence is given by the faithful to such as are according to their own hearts, and they obey the more readily when they have come to know the good qualities of those who command them.²

VI.

THE MATTER AND FORM OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

There is some difference of opinion on this question among theologians.

1. The majority regard the imposition of hands

¹ Omnes in navi sumus, in qua omnes periclitamur. Alii operantur et alii portantur. Simul tamen omnes et in tempestate periclitantur et in portu salvantur. Qui sedent ad gubernacula et qui fideliter navem amant, sentiunt quod dico. ST. AUG., *In Ps.* cvi, 12.

² Facilius ei quis obedientiam exhibet ordinato, cui assensum præbuerit ordinando. Pontif. *De presb.*

by the Bishop upon each ordinand in particular and on all the ordinands reunited after the monition given them concerning the functions and duties of the priesthood, as the matter of the Sacrament; and as for the form, they hold it is the prayer which follows: *Oremus, fratres carissimi, Deum Patrem omnipotentem.* . . . This is the most probable opinion, says St. Ligouri.

2. A goodly number, however, invoking the authority of the Council of Florence, give as the matter, the tradition of the chalice to the ordinands, and, as the form, the words of the Bishop which accompany this rite: *Accipe potestatem offerre sacrificium Deo, missasque celebrare tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis.*

3. Some unite these two opinions and look upon as essential both 'matters' and both 'forms.'

4. There are those besides, who add to these two 'matters' the imposition of hands made by the Bishop at the end of the ordination Mass, and to the 'forms' the words which he then pronounces: *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum. Quorum remisero peccata remittuntur eis, et quorum retinueris retenta sunt.*

For the discussion of these opinions one can refer to the theologians. It suffices to say here that all

these rites are rigorously prescribed and that careful attention and watch must be kept lest any of them be omitted or questionably executed.

VII.

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LAYING OF HANDS BY THE BISHOP AND PRIESTS ON THE HEAD OF EACH OF THOSE TO BE ORDAINED?

1. In so far as this is common to the ordination of deacons, its significance is identical. It indicates: (a) That a particular grace is conferred to the new priest to render him worthy of his ministry and capable of fulfilling it well; (b) That God is pleased with the offering that each makes of his person, and that He accepts him as priest and as victim. The ordination implies a mutual offering, an exchange of gifts, and this rite affords the expression of both the one and the other.

2. As for that which is peculiar to this ordination, namely, that priests join therein with the Bishop and that both hands are extended together upon each candidate, such an imposition of hands gives us to understand: (a) That in communicating or

conferring the priestly character, the Bishop bestows the highest of the Orders, and, that there be received therewith all the graces as well as the powers thereof, he gives to the ordinands all that he can give.¹

(b) That the spirit of the priesthood is one, and that all priests cannot but be gladdened at the sight of this increase to their numbers and of this communication of grace constantly going on yet never exhausted.

This ceremony is accomplished in silence, as it were through fear lest human words should perturb the working of the Spirit of God.

VIII.

WHAT IS SYMBOLIZED BY THE PLACING OF THE STOLE OVER THE SHOULDERS OF THE PRIEST AND CROSSING IT ON HIS BREAST?

The stole is the symbol of spiritual authority and of sacerdotal power as regards the Sacraments.

¹ Impositio manuum in sacramento fit ad significandum copiosum gratiæ effectum. Et ideo fit in sacramento Confirmationis in quo confertur plenitudo Spiritus sancti; et in Sacramento Ordinis in quo confertur quædam excellentia potestatis in divina mysteria. St. Th., p. 3, q. 48, a. 4.

1. In placing it over the shoulders of the young priest, the Bishop makes it clear, says St. Thomas, that he confers such authority, and that he is to use it in his everyday ministry.¹ Up to now he has worn the stole transversely, over one shoulder only, because, being but a deacon, he had not received the fulness of power, and could exercise such as he had only in dependence on the priest.

2. Placed as it is at this moment, the stole is for him at the same time a yoke and a cross, a yoke upon his shoulders and a cross upon his heart.² To this the Bishop alludes in the words: *Accipe jugum Domini: jugum enim ejus suave est et onus ejus leve.* May the priest never cease to bear the newly received yoke on his shoulders and the cross upon his bosom; may he never put off the one or the other:

¹ The stole is put on both shoulders of the priest to show that to him is given full power of dispensing the sacraments, and not as it were to be a minister to another.—*Supplem.*, q. xi, a. 7.

² *Stola longa super albam et usque ad pedes dependens signat obedientiam Christi et voluntariam servitutem pro nobis. Ipse enim pro salute nostra factus est obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Et hoc significat cancellata stola in pectore ad modum crucis. Designat etiam crux in pectore Christi passionem quam circumferre pervigili meditatione debemus in corde, et in corpore per mortificationem terrenæ delectationis. St. BONAV., Opusc. de exposit. Missæ.*

they are inseparable; and one day, as for the Apostles and all fervent priests, they will be to him the source of comforts and consolations, though at first he seemed like to find them but burdens or sufferings. *Sicut abundant passionēs Christi in nobis, ita et abundat consolatio nostra. . . Ita Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te.*

IX.

WHAT DOES THE LAST VESTMENT, THE CHASUBLE, SIGNIFY?

It signifies the charity with which the priest ought to be animated and clothed. *Accipe vestem sacerdotalem per quam caritas intelligitur*, says the Bishop to him. *Potens autem est Deus ut augeat tibi caritatem et opus perfectum.* These words admonish us to ask unceasingly the increase of this virtue in our hearts. It is as if the Bishop said to the young priest: "Beg of God to increase from day to day charity in your soul; His charity, without which this symbolic vestment would be a lie and would be unto your damnation. Recall often that without charity you are nothing before God. Though you work miracles, and have all graces and

virtues, if this one be lacking you then you have not the spirit of your priesthood and it would not be right for you to ascend to the altar."¹ If one ask why this symbol of charity is reserved to the priest and why he ought to be vested with it at the altar, it is, says St. Thomas, that the priest is minister of the Sacrament of love and it is at the altar and in the oblation of the divine Sacrifice that he celebrates the Mystery of love.²

It is without doubt, also, because, being charged with the care of souls and owing service to all who have need of it, to him is addressed to-day the question put of old to the first of pastors: *Diligis me? Diligis me plus his?* Charity comprises love of neighbor and love of God, and the two parts of the chasuble correspond to the twofold object of the virtue.³

¹ Attendat sacerdos ut signum sine significato non ferat et vestem sine virtute non portet, ne forte similis sit sepulchro deforis dealbato, intus autem omni pleno spurcitia. INN. III, *De sac. Miss.*, I, 64.

² Habet casulam quæ significat caritatem, quia ipse caritatis conficit sacramentum. ST. THOM., *Suppl.*, q. 11, a. 7. Omnibus indumentis superponitur casula, quæ quia communis est vestis, caritatem significat quæ universis virtutibus superponitur, quia cæteræ virtutes nihil sine ea utile operantur. YVO CARNUT., *De sign. indum. Sacerd.*

³ See BACUEZ, *The Divine Sacrifice and the Priest who celebrates it*, Part II, sec. II, ch. I.

X.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANOINTING OF THE PRIEST'S HANDS IN THE FORM OF A CROSS BY THE BISHOP WHILE THE *Veni Creator* IS BEING CHANTED.

This ceremony is of manifold significance:

1. The anointing of the hands of the priest signifies that, by virtue of his ordination, his soul receives an indelible character that will forever mark him off from the simple faithful, and an unction of special grace that enables him to fulfil all his duties and bear all trials and hardships with ease, with consolation and with love.

2. It is done with oil, symbol both of meekness and of strength, because the priest has need equally of strength to overcome difficulties and of meekness to reach hearts, to console and to heal them. He must know how to work as God does: *fortiter et suaviter*.

3. It is done in the form of a cross, because it is to the cross of the Savior and to His Sacrifice that are due all the graces with which the priest is blessed and which he must dispense to the faithful.

4. It is made upon the hands, because those hands are destined to do many holy and supernatural deeds, to bless the people, to administer sacraments, to bear the Lamb without spot,¹ "*Oh! how pure should be the hands, that are to be worthy of such a function,*" says the Imitation. Undoubtedly they had long ago, and have preserved still the purity that is essential. The Church takes this for granted already at tonsure; but by today that purity ought to be made perfect; wherefore is invoked the grace of the Holy Spirit, *spiritalis unctio*.

Let the priest be animated, imbued with these sentiments, and let him pray Our Savior to effect in his soul that work of grace of which the anointing is the symbol! Beholding his hands thus traced with the cross in holy oil, let him beg God so to ease and lighten the crosses He may be pleased to send him; let him not fail to promise that he will receive them with a love like that which moves God to send them. Let him ask himself if after this can he not but cherish a religious respect for his anointed hands? The very thought that they have been con-

¹ *Unctio solis sacerdotibus fit, quia propriis manibus corpus Christi tangunt.* ST. THOMAS, *In iv*, 9, d. 20.

secrated for the divine mysteries must withhold him from making, I do not say culpable, but even unbecoming use of them, such as would be little worthy of their sacerdotal character.¹

XI.

WHY THE NEW PRIESTS COME WITH ALL THE OTHER
ORDINANDS TO THE FEET OF THE BISHOP, WITH
LIGHTED CANDLE AND MAKE AN OFFERING OF IT
TO HIM, THE WHILE KISSING HIS RING AND RECEIV-
ING HIS BLESSING.

If they come to the altar thus, at the moment of the offertory, it is to express sensibly the offering they have made and will ever make of all they have and are to God, that so they may give him a generous service in His Church. They unite this oblation with that of the body and blood of the divine Victim which they are about to offer in union with the bishop. The lighted candles which they bear in their hands are emblems of that which each ought ever to be: *lucerna ardens et lucens*; men who, after the

¹ Indignum est ut manus quae sacramenta consumant
aleas tractent. ST. CYPRIAN, *De aleat.*

example of the Baptist, enkindle hearts with the fire of charity and enlighten minds with the bright and piercing light of their saving doctrine. In this ceremony, let them ask of God that they will be faithful to consume their lives in His service and for His glory. The thought may come to them that already at Baptism they have held a like candle in their hands, symbol of the Christian faith in the light of which they were called to walk. 'Tis now the moment to ratify, to confirm with all their hearts that first engagement.

XII.

WHY DO THE NEWLY ORDAINED PRIESTS SAY THE
MASS WITH THE BISHOP AND RECEIVE THE HOLY
EUCCHARIST FROM HIS HANDS?

This is a striking and sensible expression of the unity of the priesthood and of the union that should always exist between those who exercise it. Belonging one and all to the same Master, toiling at the same work and having but one and the same purpose, they ought to have and share the one spirit, the one concern and interest, the one will. *Unus*

Dominus, unum templum; unum sit etiam ministerium, says St. Jerome.¹

Note that each newly ordained priest celebrates the holy Sacrifice as well as the bishop. Their wills form but one, even if some lead or if some are behind in the recitation of the prayers. However, the rubrics direct that the priests be careful to pronounce word for word with the bishop.

XIII.

WHY DOES THE BISHOP ADDRESS TO THE PRIESTS
ESPECIALLY THESE WORDS OF THE DISCOURSE AFTER
THE LAST SUPPER: *Jam non dicam vos servos?*

He seeks thereby to make the priests feel the eminence of their newly received dignity, the change that their promotion ought to effect in their lives, and the spirit that should fill their souls. Hearing these words their thoughts should be such as these:

1. That they have now become sharers of the vocation of the Apostles. Though they do not succeed them in the episcopate, nor receive the same character, nor reach to the same high Order, they do never-

¹ *Epist. 52 ad Nepot.*

theless participate with them in the priesthood of Our Savior. And it is for this reason that Jesus honors them with the name of friends. A privilege indeed, to be numbered among the friends and representatives of the Man-God! Happy they, says the Holy Spirit, who have found a true friend! The faithful friend is a treasure without price.¹ But Your friendship, Lord, is it not, too, the most glorious of honors as well as the most precious of treasures? *Nimis honorati sunt amici tui; Deus. Nimis confortatus est principatus eorum.*² O wonderful condescension of divine goodness: we are not even worthy servants, yet we are called friends.³

2. That they ought to be, after their ordination, as Saul after his anointing: *Dixit Samuel: Insiliet in te Spiritus Domini et mutaberis in virum alium;*⁴ or rather, as the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Ghost, quite new men. Folks were astonished on beholding and hearing them, says St. Luke. Each one asked himself: "Are these the Galilaeans we knew and with whom we were wont to live?" To signify the change that is made in themselves,

¹ ECCLI., VI 15, XXV, 12.

² Ps., CXXXVIII, 37.

³ ST. GREG.

⁴ I REG. X, 6.

the bishops, who are the chiefs of the clergy, change their name before men at the same time that they are changed in rank and quality before God. They no longer sign with their family name, but with that of their Baptism and of their church or see.

3. That the spirit of the priesthood is not a spirit of servile fear, but of filial love; that priests should give thought less to the menaces of Our Savior than to His goodness and kindness; that they should consult less their interests than His. "We have not received a spirit of fear, says the Apostle, but a spirit of generosity and of trustfulness."¹ St. Paul does not disparage all fear; he adjudges such a motive of life as not being noble enough for the heart of a priest; and since God is pleased to act with such goodness with regard to His priests, He feels that they cannot have in return either too great zeal or too loving a trust.

¹ II TIM., I, 7.

XIV.

WHY DO THE NEWLY ORDAINED PRIESTS RECITE ALOUD
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BISHOP, AND AT THE END
OF THE MASS, THE APOSTLES CREED?

It is not only to testify that they are one in belief with the Church and with the Apostles, her founders; it is also, and above all, to protest solemnly their will to teach all the truths of faith, and their readiness to forgo life even, rather than deny a single one of them: *Profitentur fidem quam praedicaturi sunt*, says the Pontifical. It was in this wise and in this self-same disposition, according to a tradition, that the Apostles made their profession of faith before separating for their missions in the various parts of the world. Nothing is there more imposing or impressive than this venerable Credo, the abridgment of the revelations of God and of the beliefs of His children. May these new priests ever be able to say the Creed at holy Mass with the same spirit of religion and with the same fervent devotion.

XV.

WHY DOES THE BISHOP SAY TO EACH PRIEST AT THE
END OF THE MASS: *Accipe Spiritum sanctum?*

The bishop does for them at this moment, what Our Lord did for His Apostles the evening of His resurrection: *He breathed upon them and said unto them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained.*¹ This breathing of Our Savior upon His chosen ones recalls the vivifying, life-giving breath of the Creator upon the body of Adam, at the moment when He made of him a living being. Thus the divine Master would seem to have the Apostles and ourselves understand that by nature man is as far removed from the priesthood as that body, formed from the slime of the earth, was from the being endowed with a living soul; and that, as an act of creation and a new soul were needed to produce, to make up real man, even after the formation of the body, in like manner there must be a new spirit, a new creature, as it were, whatsoever may

¹ JOHN, XX, 22, 23.

have been all the preparation, to form the priest ready for the exercise of his functions.

The remission of sins and the justification of souls was the most wondrous work the Apostles had to accomplish, after the celebration of the divine Mysteries; it was becoming then, that, in conferring these powers upon them, the Son of God should use or give them some sensible token of this communication of His spirit, in order that they might ever be reminded, and that they should have a care to recall to the faithful how, as priests, they are but the simple organs of the Spirit of God, and not themselves the source of graces nor the sovereign masters of heavenly gifts.

The words of the bishop suggest the same thought. The newly ordained priests must understand that the ministry of the holy Tribunal is truly and wholly supernatural, that they by their own power or virtue can do nothing therein and that the Holy Ghost must be with them to there effect any good to souls.

XVI.

WHY DOES THE BISHOP UNFOLD AT THIS MOMENT THE CHASUBLE OF EACH NEW PRIEST?

The bishop thus gives them to understand two things:

1. That the power to remit sins, the earnest of which he has just given them, crowns all they have received and completes their priesthood, in this that, being thorough priests, endowed with all power and grace needed to fulfil any priestly function, it is but just that they be known and acknowledged as such and should wear the insignia thereof, quite as they who are gone before them in the ministry.

2. That the ministry of the confessional requires an increase of grace and of virtue. This is the meaning of the words of the bishop while performing this ceremony: *Stola innocentiae induat te Dominus!* As if he were to say: "May the Lord purify your soul yet more that you may be able to cleanse the souls of others." Or again: "May God keep guard over your innocence! May He preserve it from all stain! The water that is most clear and pure at its source is defiled in the cleansing of our cities; so there are

priests who have lost purity of soul while pretending to purify other souls. The demon, driven from the heart of a penitent by the virtue of the sacrament, oft seeks to enter into the heart of the confessor. It needs only an imprudence or an indiscretion to give him entrance. Trust not to your own virtue or strength, nor think that you are able even for an instant to dispense with the succor of God. You will fall infallibly, if you cease to lean on Him. But if you are faithful to invoke His Spirit, if you take always the precautions that the Church has prescribed you, that your honor and your safety exact, He will never suffer that your ministry bring you aught of regret. The horror of sin that you now cherish will grow according as you observe the more its sad effects, and grace will make up whatsoever may be wanting to you of experience and maturity: *Aetas senectutis, vita immaculata*.¹

¹ SAP., IV, 9. Fidelis est qui vocavit vos, qui etiam faciet. I THESS., v, 24.

XVII.

WHY DOES THE NEW PRIEST PLACE HIS HANDS IN THOSE OF THE BISHOP WHILE PROMISING OBEDIENCE?

In order to testify in a sensible manner that he places himself at the disposal of his bishop in regard to all that concerns his ministry, that he purposes to live in dependence upon him and to be guided by him. This is what vassals of old did when pledging homage to a suzerain or liege lord. We all do the like when we join our hands in adoring prayer to God, as to our sovereign Master.

On his part the bishop gives the priest the kiss of peace to assure him of his kindly regard and good will, and to give token that he will use his authority over him as a friend and father.

ARTICLE II.

THE DUTIES OF A PRIEST IN THE HOLY
MINISTRY.

XVIII.

WHAT IS ORDINARILY THE PRINCIPAL PRE-OCCUPATION OF A PRIEST DURING THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW HIS ORDINATION?

It is the change that has come over him and the realization that he has now to begin a new life. Whether he be assigned to regular parish work, or be given some particular function to fulfil, as teacher, instructor, or chaplain to some religious community, his manner of life will of necessity be very different from what it has hitherto been.

At the seminary his days were passed in retirement, with earnest and pious companions, under a common rule. He had only to watch over himself, and the care of his own soul cost him but little effort. All that he had to do was already marked out for him. He knew or was told what to do, at what hour and in what manner to do it; and, as all were required to

do the same as himself, he had but to fall in with or to be carried along with the general movement. To be orderly and regular, to fulfil his duties, it was quite enough that he go counter to no rule wittingly and willingly.

In the work of the ministry, or of education, it is quite otherwise. Spiritual exercises, being made in private, have no fixed hours. Save but for a few of these, it depends upon the priest himself to decide whether they shall be accomplished or omitted, shortened or changed, according to caprice or convenience. Nothing but continual attention and un-failing good will can keep up the habits formed at the seminary, such as exactness at mental prayer, diligence in the recitation of the divine office, fervor in the matter of one's visit to the most blessed Sacrament, the saying of the beads, spiritual reading, examen, confession: this, whether one be curate, chaplain, or professor. And if the resolutions taken by the young priest be not solid, as any real resolve must be, if he lack firmness and decision in the practice of them, then he runs the risk of soon forgetting them altogether, of abandoning one part of those exercises and of neglectfully acquitting the

other; of losing, in consequence, the very spirit of fervor and of compromising more or less the interests of his soul.

Besides, an ecclesiastic, invested with the sacerdotal character, may no longer think only of himself; he ought to occupy himself more or less, according to his position, with bettering spiritually his fellow-men. It is for them as well that he has received of heaven so many powers and so many graces. If he is employed in parish work, he should offer the holy Mass for his people, celebrate for them the sacred offices, administer them the sacraments. The conversion of those in sin is a work he must consider his to accomplish; so, too, the reconciliation of penitents, the teaching of catechism to the children, the visiting of the sick and the bringing to the dying all the helps of our faith that are theirs by every title. Each of these things is of capital importance, since each matters for eternity and since the manner in which each is fulfilled is often the deciding of the awful alternative of salvation or damnation for a soul. Hence, the sense of gravity of these obligations that should feel to his heart and make him careful and concerned that he accomplish them

as perfectly as possible. And yet, what often is more difficult! And what prospect is more likely to make him feel the need he has of God's assistance and the necessity he is under of putting it to profit!

Grace will not be lacking him: God has pledged Himself to give it. But the priest can be more or less faithful in coöperating with it. He can apply himself with more or less generosity to the work that is given him to do, and can exercise his ministry with varying degrees of perfection. The question is; what must he do to assure his perserverance? Two things are simply indispensable:

1. He must have at heart the keeping of two firm, well thought-out, precise resolutions concerning the two sorts of exercises that are going to fill up his life as a priest: the practices essential to a sacerdotal life, and the functions peculiar to his condition. These resolutions are to be taken to heart, deep-rooted therein, if they are to affect his conduct; and they need to be engraved upon it or become such that his heart is set upon them that they may not easily be effaced or allowed to go by default unregretted, without remorse or self-reproach; they should be like that of Our Lord, as He came into this

world; He said to His Father: *Deus meus volui, et legem tuam in medio cordis mei.*¹ *Ecce venio ut faciam, Deus, voluntatem tuam.*² To this end they must be written out, formulated neatly and with precision, submitted to some one who is authorized to see to it that they are put to practice. Ordinarily it is at the seminary, before ordination, that one attends to this duty. Should anyone have neglected this care, it is not to be further deferred. From the very beginning one has urgent need to know what it is he wants to do and how he is to do it.

Evidently this rule cannot have the rigidity or the precision of the seminary rule. One may not be able to fix more than the hour of rising; yet, one ought to foresee hindrances and irregularities. Like the vacation rule, one should determine what are the exercises to be done; the morning meditation, thanksgiving after Mass, spiritual reading, visit to the blessed Sacrament, the examen, confession, monthly retreat; together with the length of each exercise and the dispositions in which each is to be performed. As regards the ordinary functions of the ministry,

¹ Ps., xxxix, 9.

² Heb., xi, 5.

such as preaching, catechising, confessions, visitation of the sick, administration of the last Sacraments, it is needful to have concerning each settled, well formulated principles, clean cut resolutions, sanctioned and unchangeably fixed. One should consider within himself beforehand, with what mind, with what thoughts, with what views and purposes he ought and really wishes to approach the altar, ascend the pulpit, enter the confessional, catechise children or visit the people; so that it will suffice to recall each time what he has resolved in order to put himself in the right frame of mind and to have a right intention. It is essential that nothing be left unprovided for, but all should be regulated aforetime, under the eye of God and according to the inspirations of His grace.

2. Another thing also of capital import to the new priest, is to begin well the exercise of his priesthood and of the sacred ministry; that is to say, to begin from the very day of his ordination to use well his time, to be faithful to his exercises and to meet his duties in fervent accordance with the rules he felt it needful to lay down for himself. No deferring, no hesitation, no dissimulation with anyone. Let it

be understood from the first day that your resolution and intention is to be a regular and an exemplary priest, to meet duty without regard to human respect, to follow conscience and one's rule of life in everything and everywhere; abroad, in the rectory, in the church, before relatives and when with confrères, in regard to or with employees as well as with the faithful or with the children entrusted to one's care.

Our welfare as well as the glory of God demands this of us. It is well said that *a good beginning is half the work*. The commencement always has a considerable influence over the rest of the undertaking. If one begins with fervor, he gains for himself a greater measure of grace; he is already engaged in the good work and has made the right step in the right direction; he acquires strength in well-doing from day to day. This is not, of course, a positive assurance that he will persevere in this regular earnest life; but it gives solid ground for hope and confidence. And we should state here what, as a matter of fact, is necessary to live always as a holy priest and to run a successful career in the ministry: To remain faithful to five or six daily practices; to

acquit with faith and zeal the five or six duties that invariably present themselves. And, with the grace of God and the facility that habit brings, these ought not to cost too much effort. But it must be plainly understood that one will find this sort of life the more difficult and trying, according as one begins poorly, badly, half-heartedly; negligence and tepidity in the beginning mean irksomeness and hardship later on. Perhaps all will not be lost; one may not begin too late; but the violence one must sooner or later do himself to again become regular and orderly will be all the greater for the lack of courage and fidelity at the outset.

XIX.

IS THE PRIEST REALLY IN NEED OF DAILY MEDITATION,
AS IT IS COMMONLY ASSERTED?

Consider the authorities that declare its necessity. Without the least dissension or the least hesitation, all who are competent to judge of the matter and who deserve our confidence, the Fathers of the Church, the holy Doctors, the spiritual writers, the saintly priests and religious of every age and clime

teach in the most express manner that meditation, mental prayer is indispensable to the acquiring and conserving of a decent priestly spirit, and that without fidelity to this exercise, no ecclesiastic can either do good or fulfil his duties in the sacred ministry. Such testimony may not be set aside or ignored. Nor can anyone reasonably question or disparage the assertion of men who are so enlightened, so competent and so disinterested, so serious and withal so keenly sensitive to the interests of souls and the honor of the priesthood.¹

On the other hand, what need is there even of such testimony when besides, the truth of the assertion can be so readily demonstrated? A priest has two things to do in the Church: to honor God and to save souls. He is a traitor to his trust and mission if he fails in one or the other of these duties. His merit as a priest is the higher according as he fulfils both in a more perfect way. Now mental prayer is necessary to accomplish them; if he neglects it, he neglects them also and in the same proportion.

To be sure, just because he neglects mental prayer, a priest will not leave off rendering to God the pre-

¹ Exhortation of Pius X to the Catholic Clergy.

scribed offices of worship, or give over the offering of holy Mass, or the exercise of his sacred functions, the services of the Church or the recitation of public prayers. Yet, the question remains: How shall he do these things that are duties? In what sentiments? With what spirit of religion or piety? God cares little, says Our Savior, for what appears outwardly.¹ The most magnificent ceremonies are worth nothing in his eyes if not accompanied or prompted by the dispositions they express. Being Himself a spirit, it is the spirit He looks to: He will be honored in spirit and in truth. *The hour cometh and now is, says He, when the true adorers of the Father will adore Him in spirit and in truth. God is a spirit and they who adore Him must adore in spirit and truth.*² The priest, if he would be pleasing to God and make acceptable to Him his acts of homage, must be animated with the very spirit of Our Savior, the spirit of adoration, of religion, of supplication. But how be this, if he have not like Jesus the spirit of prayer, if he be not accustomed to recollection, if he know not what it is to enter into himself, to keep

¹ Populus hic labiis me honorat: cor autem eorum longe est a me. MATTH., XV, 8.

² JOHN, IV, 23-24.

alive in himself a sense of the presence of God, to feed his mind with thoughts upon God's divine perfections, and upon the mysteries and virtues of Our Lord? A priest who does not meditate, who has not a prayerful mind does not, cannot appreciate the things of God: he does not understand them; he has no relish for them. Though he hold in his hands or have before his eyes, the divine mysteries of which he is the minister and dispenser, yet he sees nothing beyond the externals, and is no more touched by them than are the ordinary faithful. Though he pass all his life in a round of the most sacred functions, amidst holy objects, he will render but little homage to God; he will be but little given to the practice of virtue; he will acquire but little merit. And this is not saying all. It is further to be feared that his negligence will render him the more blameworthy in that his ministry is the more august; and that, instead of being to him a source of much merit, his vocation may be yet to him an occasion of many faults and the subject of reproach and reprobation.

But will a priest, not given to mental prayer, at least be of some use to souls? Will he do any more for the sanctification of souls than he has done for

the glory of God? No, unfortunately; in this as in the other he will be found wanting, in all his works he will fail in some essential, he will be lacking in that which ought to be the very soul of his endeavor, in that which alone can give it real worth; the interior spirit, the inspiration of faith and the ardor of charity; because he neglects that which alone will ground him or establish him in these dispositions.

To reach souls and to give them or to inspire in them confidence, to speak to them worthily of holy things, to induce them to work for their own perfection by fervent, telling exhortation, what must the priest have? The spirit and the heart of a friend, of an intimate of God; the view of the things of faith that such an one has; the power to speak of them as such an one does. Have you never observed the works of grace that such a priest accomplishes wherever he may happen to labor? He is a saint: he sanctifies others; he diffuses the spirit of sanctity; a word from his lips has more virtue than a hundred discourses that are not the breath of a living faith.

Yet there is no other way to become such a man of God, to think, to feel, to speak as such, if one will not choose to apply himself, as a holy man does, to

the things of God; if one will not be imbued with them by the aid of enlightening mental prayer and the ardor of contemplation.

Without such prayer, no holiness, says St. Ligouri: *Omnes sancti per orationem sancti facti sunt.*¹ For like reason, without mental prayer, no interior enlightenment, no fervor, no intense, earnest, Christian, priestly life. Faith languishes and is insipid; hope is dormant; zeal is without ardor or compelling force. How can any priest in such a state be pleasing to God? How should he inspire any soul to what he does not care to aspire? Can he even so much as give them any notion of what whole-souled Christian life is?

The right appreciation, the love, the practice of meditation, these are the dispositions most necessary to a priest.² To practice this spiritual exercise in the ministry as at the seminary, such should be the very first article of his rule. He owes it to himself and to all concerned in his priestly life to impose it upon himself, as a law, that he will remain faithful, cost what it may. Of course, meditation can be

¹ *Praxis*, II.

² *Contemplatio Domini in cæteris hominibus quæritur per consilium, in sacerdotibus vero exigitur per præceptum.*
RUPERT., *In Levit.*, II, 40.

made at almost any hour besides in the morning, when convenience suits, and not *necessarily* at rising time; one *might* make meditation less regularly than at the seminary, according to occasions or attraction. The hermits gave themselves this liberty. But secular priests may not. In the sacred ministry, if meditation is not a daily exercise, if one is not exact in consecrating to it the first hour of waking, it will not be made; it will be too difficult to find the time required for it later on; or the inclination will not be had: it will either be given up or made in a fashion that takes the good out of it. Besides, if there be no meditation made, at least in part, before going to the altar, how will holy Mass be said? And what sort of a thanksgiving will follow? He that is not recollected and absorbed in or penetrated with the thought of God before the holy Mysteries is likely to celebrate without heart and without attention.

To be faithful to meditation, many find it necessary to do violence to self. Some pretend they have not the time: others, experiencing no liking for it, but only dryness, imagine they but waste time at it. Let everyone be determined and persevere

doggedly, no matter what the obstacles.¹ Meditation becomes more and more unattractive and hard the longer it is omitted. It has its agreeable features, its consolations, or, at least, it is readily and easily made, when one is exact and careful to prepare it the evening before and to attend to it every morning.

XX.

DOES IT VERY MUCH MATTER THAT ONE CELEBRATE
HOLY MASS WELL?

It matters essentially from the viewpoint of sanctification: nothing more so. If it be of so great advantage to the faithful to assist daily at the holy Mass, says St. Francis de Sales, this divine Sacrifice being to all else what the sun is to the stars; if Our Lord has willed, according to the same saint, that the Mass be in His Church the very center of religion and the source of true piety, what must it mean to the priest to celebrate each morning, and of what consequence is it not for himself that he

¹ *Universum bellum quod inter nos et dæmones conficitur non est de alia re quam de oratione. Est enim illis vere adversa et odiosa, nobis autem salutaris et benigna. St. NILUS, abb. De orat., 47.*

have a care to gather in their fulness all the graces it affords? The share of them that may be his is in keeping with his privileged function therein. He has not merely, as the simple faithful, the liberty to approach the altar, to unite in spirit with the divine Victim or to receive Him into his bosom: it is his to consecrate the Victim, to offer Him to the heavenly Father, to nourish his soul with the sacred Host and to dispense this divine Food to the faithful. Besides being the witness and the adorer of divine Mysteries, he is also the minister thereof; he coöperates in the sacrifice as well as in the Sacrament, and 'tis he who applies both to himself. Before all others, consequently, and more than all others, he is called to enjoy their fruits. *Inebriabo animam sacerdotum pinguedine, et populus meus bonis meis adimplebitur.*¹

The offering of the divine Sacrifice is the priest's chiefest function. All other works are subordinate to that. Not only are they inferior to it in dignity, but they are dependent upon it, or they subserve and bear upon it in some way. All that the priest does before Mass, the prayers he recites, his meditation, the hours of the breviary dispose him for the

¹ JER., XXXI, 14.

approach to the altar. And all that he does afterwards is to be a thanksgiving for the favor he has just received, and a gathering up of the fruits it brings or a distribution of them to others. All his actions, even the most profane, should come within its influence. The memory of the altar he ascended in the early morning, of the Sacrifice he there offered, of the Victim that nourished his soul, ought to be with him throughout the day, everywhere. Thus the manner in which the priest spends his day, as regards his sanctification, corresponds to the way in which he has celebrated the holy Mysteries. A Mass said with fervor—worthily, attentively and devoutly—has naturally its result in many acts done with piety and edification. And, as life in the ministry is but a series of days differing but little one from the other, one can easily understand and should realize that such a life will be more or less holy and priestly according as one forms the habit of bringing to the altar dispositions more or less perfect.

How could one imagine things otherwise? It is inconceivable that, after having of a morning worthily celebrated, one should spend badly the rest of the

day; that, on descending the altar steps and leaving the place where he has immolated himself with the divine Victim, a priest can allow himself to idle away the day; that, after having received with a vivid faith the sacred Host and fed on the precious Body and Blood, one can dismiss all this from his thoughts and assume a language, a spirit, and sentiments utterly different therefrom. He, who but just now made to God an offering more precious than all the world, who has protested so earnestly, in the name of His Son, that heaven and earth are not worthy to be immolated to His glory, could he let himself be seduced by such things as the world has to proffer, be drawn away after its vanities, and so be prevailed upon as to set his pleasure in the favor, in the enjoyment, in the affection of creatures? After having offered to God, for the salvation of souls, the Body and Blood of Jesus, could he rest unconcerned as to the salvation of the faithful about him, could he neglect to be of help to them, could there be anything of reluctance in his service, or aught of self-seeking or self-love? That would be morally impossible. If the holy Mass is offered with the truly priestly dispositions of lively faith and of fervor, such

as it demands of all who ascend the altar, the day of the priest will be holy, and into each of the works of his day he will carry the spirit and heart of the first.

But, let it be observed here, to celebrate decently and holily, it is not enough to protest to God, while going to the Church or when stepping to the altar: "I desire to say Mass well; I wish to celebrate piously and fervently." If the fervor such words imply be not in the heart already to prompt them, no mere such wish can put it there. Whatever this desire may be, if we are habitually negligent and dissipated of mind, we will remain negligent and dissipated during the celebration of our Mass. And do not say that at least, you will attend to your exterior, for the sake of the faithful and their edification by putting on an air of recollection and of devotion. In affairs of devotion, whatever does not come naturally and from the heart is affectation, and nothing is more readily recognized as such, nor is anything more offensive or disgusting than affected piety. He alone edifies who gives no thought to edification as such, and who is quite oblivious of self for that he is occupied with God.

What is needed then to celebrate well, to be at

the altar what a priest there should be? Cherish, with regard to the divine Sacrifice, a vivid faith and a deep sense of religion; but have that faith and that religion in your very heart of hearts. Wherefore, strive to acquire them in good time, neglecting nothing that will help to instill, to imbue your heart and soul with these sentiments; love to meditate upon the holy Eucharist, on the Real Presence, on the holy Sacrifice; seek to behold with the mind's eye Our Savior in His perfections, in His virtues, and in His mysteries; be found often in adoration before His tabernacle, there to ask the grace to know Him better, to love Him the more, to offer Him and to receive Him ever more and more worthily; never deem that you celebrate with sufficient fervor but desire always greater faith, deeper confidence, and more love; aspire to make better each day the preparation and thanksgiving; read what you can thereon, that the spirit of pious thoughts may find an echo in or bestir the soul, and fill it with holy affections and inspire it with appealing examples; these are the things to which a minister who is fervent at the altar applies himself constantly.

A priest who is faithful to this rule cannot fail to grow in virtue and enjoy a priesthood blessed with abundant fruit. He honors the majesty of God, he provides for the needs of Mother Church, he sustains the faith, he is the soul of the fervor among the faithful around him. He renders more service by the ardor of his prayer and by the evidence of his piety than a multitude of others can ever do by their studied discourses. To him do the words of the Imitation apply: *When he celebrates, he honors God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the dead, and makes himself partaker of all that is good.*¹

XXI.

OUGHT A PRIEST DESIRE AND PURPOSE TO BECOME A GOOD CONFESSOR?

He should desire this keenly, if he really purposes to fulfil his mission and to be of help to souls. The faithful have sore need of making their confessions well, not only at the hour of death, but as well at every period of their lives and in a multitude of

¹ IMIT., IV, 5.

particular circumstances.¹ It is practically on this condition alone that they are admitted to the sacraments, and the good they get from them depends essentially on the worth of their confession previously made. And yet, who can say? If they have no good confessor, in whom they trust and can come to easily, without hesitation, who will do them good and assist them in their very confessions, it is to be feared, it is quite certain that more than one will not come to confession at all when he ought, or will make a poor useless confession, even an unworthy one.

The welfare of the faithful demands, then, that there be a plenty of good confessors and the interest of every priest ought to make him desire equally to be of this number. In those countries wherever the faith endures with all its vigor, a goodly part of the priest's time is taken up with his hours in the confessional. Over and above the number of the faithful who are brought to their confessions by reason of circumstances, in order to reconcile themselves with their God or to prepare for the reception of some unusual grace, there is always a certain

¹ Erit fons patens domui Jacob et habitantibus Jerusalem in ablutionem peccatorum. ZAC., XIII, 1.

number of real earnest souls who make it a rule to approach the sacred Tribunal often, that they may keep the purity of their souls or make them purer still and share more fully in the holy Eucharist: nowadays, especially among us. Then, there are the young who have just made their first holy Communion, or who are preparing for It; and the children, still in their beginnings of catechism-learning, whom one should be at pains to teach how to make their confessions, to give them the habit of regular confession, and who can be taught the leading of a good Christian life only by having them come to the priest occasionally to receive from him such special admonition as each may need; finally, there are the sick who must set their conscience in order, whom the priest must not let die without first having prepared them well. Thus, this ministry is continual in the life of a priest in a parish, and each should want to fulfil it well, with all possible fruit; that is to say, in such a manner that his penitents shall make their confessions with the sincerity, the penitence and the purpose of amendment necessary for deriving any profit therefrom and to give the absolution opportunity to do all the good to their

souls which it is capable of effecting. The priest, then, should leave little undone that can assure the help of God's grace in this ministry and can help him to acquire the qualities that make for a good confessor.

It is enough to read the life of any holy priest to understand how truly a good confessor can be of help to souls that come to him, and what advantage it is to the Church that the ministry of the holy Tribunal be thus effective. In fact, the highest authorities unhesitatingly attribute to it, for the most part, whatever of religion and piety is to be found among Catholics. *It is the persuasion of all, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, that whatever of sanctity and of true religion, by the great goodness of God, has been preserved in the Church, must, in great part, be attributed to the confessional.*¹

¹ *Catech. of Council of Trent*, II, de paen., 45. Let there be suitable confessors; then will there be thorough reformation of all Christians. ST. PIUS V. Cf. ST. LIGOURI, *Praxis*; GAUME, *Confessors' Manual*.

XXII.

WHAT ARE THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD CONFESSOR?

To administer worthily and fruitfully the sacrament of Penance to all the faithful, a priest has need of much light and virtue.

1. He must be enlightened and well instructed. Why? Because a confessor has not only to guide himself, to order his own life, to judge of his own soul's condition and of his obligations, and to pick his own way to safety; he has, besides, to lead all those who address themselves to him, that is to say, a crowd of persons varying in character, convictions, age and capacity; it is incumbent upon him to direct each along his peculiar way, to tell each what he must do and what it would be advisable for him to do, what he has to accomplish and what he must avoid in order to please God and arrive safely in heaven. How can such a charge be fulfilled, if one has neither great lights nor is thoroughly instructed?

There are three things particularly that a confessor has to know. (a) Moral Theology, that is, not merely the fundamental treatises, Human Acts, Con-

science, Laws, Sins, but as well the special treatises of the Decalogue and of the Commandments of the Church, those on duties of States of Life, on Justice and Contracts, and on the practical side of the sacraments, especially of Matrimony and Penance. If one be ignorant of the obligations of one's penitents he can neither discern their faults nor appreciate the gravity of them. If he cannot distinguish between precepts and counsels, between justice and charity, nullity and prohibition, necessity of precept and necessity of means, what sort of rule of conduct will he trace out for them? And if he does not know the limitation of his power of jurisdiction, how acquired and how lost, on whom dependent and over whom to be exercised, with what assurance can he exercise it?¹ (b) Those things that can serve to inspire in penitents supernatural contrition for their faults and a firm purpose of amendment: the sort of knowledge which, according to many, is not less necessary than the first, for the undoing of bad habits of life and to make sure of the actual remission of

¹ Considera sacerdotis esse officium de lege interrogatum respondere. Si sacerdos est, sciat legem Domini, si ignorat legem, ipse se arguit non esses acerdotem. S. HIERON., *In Agg.*, II, 12.

sins. (c) The maxims of the holy Gospel, or the doctrine of Christian perfection; in order to be able to teach souls of good will what it is that God would have of them or the surest and straightest way to Him. And is not this that it is of much importance to teach the greater number of penitents, such as are seen to come frequently and regularly to confession?

This simple exposé, incomplete as it is, is yet sufficient to make clear how rash it would be of anyone to undertake the work of the Confessional having nothing but the elements of natural law and even an abundance of 'common sense', or without first taking much trouble to retain and increase the comparatively elementary knowledge acquired in the seminary.¹ One can see, in studying the Theology of St. Ligouri, to what studies this holy Doctor believed it his duty to apply himself in order to be a worthy and able confessor and to give to his religious the means to become enlightened and helpful priests in the confessional.

¹ Affirmo in statu damnationis esse confessarium qui sine sufficienti scientia ad confessiones excipiendas se exponit. Deus ipse his verbis eum reprobatur: Quia tu scientiam repulisti, repellam te ne sacerdotio fungaris mihi. S. Lig., *Praxis*, n. 18.

2. A confessor has a still greater need of holiness than of science. Two virtues at least, are necessary to him; zeal and prudence. They are indispensable and continually put to practice.

(a) He has need of zeal, that is, of vivid charity, or a sensible, ardent desire for the procuring of the honor of God and the purifying of souls. This is the soul of the ministry; but nowhere is it more essential than in the tribunal of Penance.¹ It is only zeal, pure, constant, patient, generous zeal that can make one love for any length of time a duty that is so monotonous, so obscure, so difficult and trying, so disheartening and so repulsive at times, and inspire the ardor and constancy required of one to attend to it well. It alone can make dear to us the many, many souls whom we know not, of whom we have nothing to hope or expect for ourselves, who come to us only because they have need of our charity and of our services. It alone can put into our hearts the sentiments that are calculated to touch other hearts, and bring to our lips the words

¹ Ad audiendas confessiones, non inani gloria, non lucri cupiditate, non denique ullo humano affectu ductus, sed salutis fidelium procurandæ studio inflammatus accedat. S. CAROL., *Inst. ad Conf.*

that sinners have need to hear, that will make them break with sin, resolve upon sacrifice and mortification, and purpose a life of virtue. If the priest has no ardor for the purifying and sanctifying of souls, if this ardor is not supernatural and equal to any trial, he will soon lose all liking for the work of the confessional; he will, before very long, come to look upon it as a regrettable constraint that he must therein spend the best hours of his day; he will seek to get rid of the burden; or he will begin to discriminate between penitents. He will be annoyed by the poor, the little ones, the ignorant, and the infirm who come to him, or require him, or any such as Our Lord preferably called unto Himself; and those whose return he will look for or to whom he will go eagerly and with a sort of longing, to whom he will be deferential and kindly, will be such as have least need of *his* assistance and whose communications will be to him the least wholesome or salutary. Soon confessions will have become for him mere routine and for his penitents mere formality. He will no longer find in his heart words of encouragement or exhortation; and, if his ministry still continue, the spirit of it will have left him: the fruits of it shall be sought for in vain.

(b) If it is necessary that zeal be sincere and enduring, it must also be prudent. Prudence is needed in a confessor for his own sake as well as for the sake of his penitents. To guard against detriment to his own soul, he must be unceasingly watchful; he must be diffident of himself, invoking constantly the aid of divine grace; he must know how to resist the instincts of nature and the inclinations of his heart. He cannot but meet with, one day or another, in the holy Tribunal simple, guileless, affectionate souls, who readily become attached to whoever shows interest in their welfare or who does them a good service; yet, whatever be their guilelessness or their virtue, they are dangerous; they can be hurtful to the confessor, by weakening and alloying his zeal for their salvation and inspiring a return of affectionate regard that is wholly natural. If he is prudent he will never be taken unawares. He will watch over his thoughts, his sentiments, his sight, his words, and his external behavior. He will so bear himself that no one will observe in him the mere man, but the representative of God, one of *those of the resurrection* who have died to nature and who live of *the life of angels*.¹ *Posside pru-*

¹ LUKE xx, 35, 36.

dentiam, et custodiet te, says Wisdom.¹ Necessary for the safety of one's own soul, prudence is quite as indispensable to the confessor for the guidance of his penitents. It is prudence that will tell him how he is to direct each of them, what account he is to take of their position, condition, character, habits. Prudence will bring him to recognize their vocation, the degree of perfection to which they can attain, the advice it is well to give them, when it is opportune to stir up, to sustain, to moderate their ardor. It is prudence, in fine, that will restrain every indiscreet word that may rise to his lips, that will prevent his speaking idly or without need, even with his fellow-priests, of many a thing that self-love would like to utter, but is better left unsaid, concerning penitents heard, parishes, houses or circumstances in which one has exercised ministry, etc.

This practical wisdom can hardly be acquired by studious effort; but is obtained of Heaven through prayer; and is developed by vigilance over one's self and by grace. It can, besides, be possessed in varying degrees. And though, in order to rise to

¹ PROV., IV, 5, Cf. OLIER, *Esprit d'un directeur des âmes*.

a certain degree of perfection, there are required special favors and privileged gifts of prudence, there is not an ecclesiastic who cannot by good will, application and constancy, acquire them in a measure sufficient to enable him to do much honor to God and many a precious service to souls.

XXIII.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE BEHAVIOR OF A PRIEST WITH REGARD TO THE SICK?

Upon hearing that one of his people is sick or suffering, he ought, if he is the one to deal with the individual, to inquire concerning the condition and dispositions of the sufferer and to lose little time in visiting him. "Let not the shepherd of souls wait until he is summoned by the sick, but rather let him go to him of his own accord," says St. Charles.¹ And, for all the more reason, let him have a care not to put off calling, if he has been asked to call.

Were he not in danger of death, and had he no immediate reason to think of the last sacraments, it

¹ *Inst. ad past.*

would still be an act of charity, meritorious before God and much appreciated by the faithful, to visit him. Besides, however little reason there be for concern or inquietude, regarding his physical condition, it is needful to profit by the first invitation or intimation, in order to make sure of the welfare of the soul in question. Have a care, of course, to give no unwarranted alarm; but also be on guard against illusion, human respect, pusillanimity; speak out frankly when the danger is certain.

In going to visit the sick, recall the example of Our Lord, how eager and prompt He was to go to the infirm, the poor especially,¹ for the sake of their souls, more even than for the well-being of their bodies. Strive to be animated with His spirit and ask that His grace may help you to gain the hearts of those to whom you are about to minister. While on the way, go modestly, in the presence of God, thinking prayerfully what you can say that will be of consolation and of pious inspiration to the sick one or to his anxious, troubled ones. The visit may well be brief; but it should be the occasion of a word of sympathy,

¹ **MATT. VIII, 7, 14.**

of encouragement, of edification, of an evincing of interest, and, at times, of giving some help.¹

From the very beginning one should beg of God in behalf of one's dying penitents the grace of a good confession, of sincere repentance, and of a firm resolve to amend. The priest should think seriously of the importance of this grace; the salvation of the sick one depends on it: if given the happiness of confessing well, there will be another chosen soul in heaven.

While carrying Holy Viaticum to the dying, offer to Our Lord earnest, religious homage, thankfulness and love. See to it, as far as you can, that He be received becomingly in the abode wherein He deigns to enter. Pray to Jesus in behalf of the poor afflicted soul that perhaps cannot now well pray for himself and is unable in his illness to have all that liberty and power of mind desirable, and ask, too, for yourself the grace to receive also the Holy Viaticum before death.

¹ Oportet suscipere infirmos ac meminisse verbi Domini Jesu, quoniam ipse dixit: Beatius est magis dare quam accipere. Act., xx, 35. Egentis mentem doctrinæ sermo non penetrat, si hunc apud ejus animum manus misericordia non commendat. Tunc autem verbi semen facile germinat, quando hoc in audientis pectore pietas prædicantis rigat. S. GREG., M. *De cura past.*, II, 7.

When anointing the infirm reflect admiringly upon the mercy of God towards His chosen ones in their extremity; look upon them, at this moment, as suffering members of the Man-God; desire keenly to fill them with the Spirit of the Savior and to prepare them well ere they are ushered into the presence of God.¹

XXIV.

HAS NOT THE PRIEST OBLIGATIONS TOWARDS THE DEPARTED ALSO?

A priest should faithfully nourish in his heart the memory of the dead, and with faith and piety do all that his faith commands of him for the honor of their bodies and for the relief of their souls.

Religion and charity alike demand that their bodies be interred with honor. The saints of the Old Dispensation, who believed in the resurrection, were ever careful to perform this duty and God, more than once, praised and rewarded them for it.² Christians,

¹ *Infirmus fui et visitastis me. MATTH., xxv, 36. Cum ipso sum in tribulatione. Ps., xc, 15.*

² *Quando sepeliebas mortuos et derelinquebas prandium tuum et mortuos abscondebas per diem in domo tua et nocte sepeliebas eos, ego obtuli orationem tuam Domino. TOB., xii, 12.*

and priests above all, more enlightened because of their faith, must not neglect the bodies of their brethren, for they were sanctified by the sacraments and by the Holy Eucharist in particular, and were the temples of the Holy Ghost and organs of divine grace. And the very offices of religion that are to be observed with regard to them, had they no other purpose than to do honor to these remains, deserve to be performed in a pious manner and with a sincere affection.

Those things, however, that the priest is called upon to do for their departed souls should be yet more dear to his heart. The priest has received power to offer the holy Sacrifice for the dead as for the living: *Tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis*. Therefore, he is to give himself to this duty diligently and piously. If he seem not to interest himself in the prayers that he must recite for this intention, if he appear attentive to externals only, he will shock and give pain to those that behold him, and he may fear that they will suspect him of having little real or living faith in the future life, or of lacking charity for the poor souls that so much need his ministrations.

Thus a priest who has but little concern or thought

of the dead and is lacking in zeal for their deliverance will easily be a scandal. This danger is particularly to be dreaded in our day, when the faith of so many is weak, indeed, and when so few prayers are said for the dead. The priest should not be a party or contributor to this, especially when by his sincerity and devotion he can impress and convince the lukewarm or the unbelieving in a moment when they are likely to be most susceptible: at least, he should be loth to neglect anything that will evince his intense faith in the life hereafter and that can be of consolation to the bereaved faithful who have recourse to his ministry in behalf of their relatives and friends to whom they were united and dearly attached in life.

XXV.

OUGHT NOT A PRIEST DEVOTE HIMSELF SPECIALLY TO
THE HUMBLER OF THE FAITHFUL?

1. The priest is debtor to all the faithful; and, after the example of St. Paul should strive to be all things to all men; but that does not or should not hinder his being devoted to a certain class. We have no word of blame for those who bestow their care

upon the higher classes. There are ecclesiastics who by their birth, their education, their character, their position, are manifestly destined for this sort of work and accomplish great good thereat. Nevertheless, it is to be desired that the great number of priests should turn their attentions chiefly to the lowlier of their flock, to the people, because it is there, among them, that is the real body of society; there is felt mostly the need of religious instruction and there one can be confident of doing the most real good. Blessed is the priest who feels this attraction and corresponds to it.

Such a one is truly following in the footsteps of the divine Master. Who can doubt that He had always the most wise, as well as the most holy purposes and views; that, in very fact, while He was among men on earth, He always did what was for the greatest good? But was it not to the people, to the crowd that He ordinarily gave His attention and addressed Himself? Were they not always the lowly, the common folks whom he sought out for instruction and whom He strove to gain for God?¹ He did not refuse Himself to persons of rank or of means; on the con-

¹ Cf. MARK X, 21; LUKE VII, 36, 50; XIX, 8, 9, etc.

trary, He received them cordially, even eagerly; He made them helpers to the progress of His work; yet He turned to the crowd habitually; He lived with the ordinary folk; it was these He called to Himself and they were the ones whom He labored to instruct.¹ One cannot fail to note that there was no soul but was infinitely dear to Him, and that He yearned to lead each, even the lowliest, into the kingdom of God.

If we are of the same purpose as He, if we are laboring for the same work, why should we hold to different course? The condition of the world is not other than it was. Today, as then, common people form the majority; almost the whole. If we have them not, whom shall we have? Practically no one. But if we succeed in gaining them, then we have practically all. And is not the first step towards gaining them, to address one's self to them, to instruct, to persuade, to convince them? Once upon a time, one could look upon it as the only essential to win over the wealthy classes, because the others were drawn along in their wake; but it is not that way now. Besides that the wealthier classes are scarcely docile to the maxims of the Gospel, and that they have no

¹ LUKE, IV, 18; JOHN, VII, 49.

zeal in the teaching or the spreading of them, they have now lost the influence they so long enjoyed. They have no longer the confidence of the people; they have no authority that the people will accept; their prestige is gone; the people judge for themselves and examine all from their own point of view.

2. On what conditions will the priest retain and increase his influence with the people?

By evident self-denial and generous devotion to them. This means he must voluntarily share in their lowliness, privation, and sacrifice. He will have to forego intellectual as well as sensible satisfactions; things that are procured by association with the cultured and refined, as well as those pleasures that one finds in a comfortable, undisturbed sort of life.¹ He must know, like Our Savior, how to take his pleasure with the poor, to sympathize with the afflicted, to be a consolation and a help to them. It is but little if he gives them his time, instructs them in their duties, preaches to them; he will have to show them by his example what it all means, especially the sort of virtue he urges upon them: he

¹ Quo plus te operari viderit populus, magis diligit. S. AMB., *De off. min.*

must show himself always a man of mortified life, detached, patient, a man of simplicity in all, and of kindness that is genuine and abiding however tried. These virtues are not over pleasant to practice; and to make them habitual are required a priest's heart and great graces of God.

As to the different little means that one may employ, they are variety, legion, and will be chosen according to the environment in which one finds himself, the position one occupies, the resources at one's command and the liberty one enjoys. But this much may be said, which experience vouches for, that, to make one's ministry much desired, or even acceptable to some, the priest must have for all a charity that is sincere, generous and wholly supernatural, and a heartfelt desire for the salvation of every one of his flock; his chief and if need be, his only happiness must be in doing a service to some soul, even the most wretched and dissolute; he should feel honored with the confidence of the poorest and meanest, have a care to receive them with honest kindness whether in his house, or in the sacristy, in the holy Tribunal, at the baptismal font, at catechism, at funeral services; he must take an interest himself in their condi-

tion, in their family, in their affairs, readily respond to their appeal to him, in their sickness and their trials; he needs to have always some kindly or pleasant word, that will give them heart and be such as they expect from a priest; in his instructions or discourses he must not seem to be speaking to the elite of the faithful, but rather to all, in simple, unaffected language, that can be readily understood so that all may grasp the truths and admonitions they have need to know, understand and receive; nothing in his exterior, his dress, the furnishing of his house, should be noticeable for or indicative of fastidiousness or be too much above the ordinary and decent; he should favor and foster, as far as possible, those good works that are organized for the relief of suffering; in fine, let him give the faithful reason to know that he is good hearted and that his heart is in the right place, that he feels for those that suffer and that, if he does not relieve all the wretchedness within his vision, or if he sometimes appears to be reserved in his giving, it is because he lacks only the means, not that he is wanting in generous good will.

He who will hold to this manner of priestly deportment will surely do great service to the Church. He

will make sure for himself of priest's reward in heaven and will bring upon his head many a hearty and humble blessing while still on earth.¹

XXVI.

WHAT ARE THE FAULTS AGAINST WHICH A YOUNG PRIEST NEEDS TO BE ON HIS GUARD?

Each individual has his own character and, among his inclinations, a predominant fault that he must watch over with special care. But there are dangers common to all and against which every cleric really must fortify himself, especially at the outset of his ministry; they are: dissipation of mind, waste of time, energy and opportunity, etc., vanity, the seeking or taking of one's comfort, worldliness.

1. *Dissipation or wastefulness.* If it is necessary at the seminary to attend to one's self lest there be no recollection of mind, with what discretion, with what reserve, with what good will must the priest

¹ Beatus qui intelligit super egenum et pauperem! Ps. XL, 2. Oportet meminisse verbi Domini Jesu, quoniam ipse dixit: Beatius est magis dare quam accipere. ACT., XX, 35. Qui seminat in benedictionibus, de benedictionibus et metet. I COR., IX, 16.

have a care to keep from unpriestly habits of mind in the world? The first days principally, everything makes a vivid impression upon the young priest; almost everything attracts his attention, and is apt to move him to a sort of feverish activity. The functions that are his, faultiness therein, the obligation to acquit all his duties, the notion that his behavior may give of his person, these preoccupy him to the extent of robbing him of all peace of mind and liberty of thought. Add to these the unforeseen occupations and the inevitable upsetting of much that he planned, and you can appreciate how hard he will find it to be faithful to his exercises of piety and to carry forthwith into his priestly life those dispositions of faith, of piety, of fervor, he is convinced are exacted of him. Here is he, then, exposed the very first thing to omit or to abridge some of his spiritual exercises and to accomplish others hastily or negligently. If he begins by letting meditation go, or by cutting short his thanksgiving, by omitting his visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the rosary, spiritual reading, if he gets the habit of reciting the office with his lips only, of saying Mass without devotion, more taken up with thought or consciousness of the

faithful beholding him than of the presence of His Savior whom he consecrates and receives, what a sad beginning and what a poor augury! He will tell himself, no doubt, that this condition of things will not be for long; and he will promise himself to be more pious presently, more assiduous, more fervent, as soon as he has the leisure. He is fooling himself. The causes of dissipation will but double and the practice of recollection will become the harder the longer it is put off. If he does not take himself in hand the very first days, if he lets himself be carried along by merely natural activity, if he starts the habit of being unmindful of God in his functions because of giving his thoughts wholly to men and of being anxious only to save appearances, it will soon be evident that he has practically lost real possession of himself and all sentiment of devotion. The liking for meditation is gone with the habit of making it. He simply cannot now enter into himself, either when reciting the office or going to the altar, when making his own confession or when hearing the confessions of others. In a word, there will be nothing priestly about him. Not having a priest's heart in his works, how can he hope to have the merit of them or to see any good come of them?

2. *Vanity.* What could be more flattering to self-love than to see one's self, all at once, at the very first step into public life, the object of attention, of esteem and of respect from all, speaking with authority as a master and a teacher, having to instruct, to exhort, to reprehend, to judge, to absolve persons of all ages and of every condition, to exercise every moment functions that are the holiest and the most sublime! If one be not well grounded in humility, certain it is that inwardly there will be a stirring of pride and a sense of self-complacency. *Rara est humilitas honorata*, says St. Bernard: the more so if one have success, if one is heard favorably and listened to with pleasure, if one has reason to believe or to know that he is esteemed somewhat, whether as a preacher, or as a confessor, or for his bearing at the altar. These things are gratifying, they are apt to be looked upon as a proof of one's real merit, and may be the occasion of self commendation as being rather superior. Henceforth, a priest thus affected works for himself and thinks only of self or in relation to self. The glory of God and the welfare of souls mean nothing much to him any longer, at least as a motive of work; 'tis his own prestige and honor now, the good opin-

ion, the affection, and the acknowledgments of men. No more relish for anything that is not taken note of by the world and does not come to the knowledge of men. The catechism classes, the care of and the looking after the poor, the visitation of the sick, important as these are, lose attractiveness. He reserves all his zeal now for preaching, and particularly for solemn discourses to be delivered on occasions or before select congregations. He keeps up his ministry and still is found in the confessional; but by and for persons of consideration, talent perhaps, or of position or affluence, or whose regard and affection he wants; not the little ones, the ordinary folk, the infirm, the dying: he does not want to have anything to do with them; nor they with him. And of course, in the confessional as in the pulpit, what he seeks is not the turning of souls to God, to put into their hearts a horror or fear of sin, a purpose of right living or to become more perfect, to bring them to an understanding and to the practice of the Gospel precepts; it is to please and to show off, to ingratiate himself and to curry favor, to make admirers, partisans, patrons and helpers, to make his way to higher places. To this end, nothing is spared. There is ar-

dor, assiduity, competency. Ah! says a holy Doctor, if the glory of God were but sought after with the same zeal as one's own honor; if the good of souls and the service of Jesus Christ were the only aim in labors, what a reward would man lay up for himself in eternity! *Minori pretio emi poterat margaritum Christi.*¹ Unfortunately, one cannot pretend to reach to these two things at one and the same time, for to will the one is to renounce the other.

3. *The love of comfort*: There is nothing more out of keeping with the spirit of Our Savior or contrary to the instructions He gives His ministers. It is, however, just what nature suggests, what the sight of the world inspires, what too often gets the better of good ecclesiastics at the very moment when they step into their ministry and are forming their first habits of life as priests. They know well enough that they should carry the cross and follow their Savior, and they do not really refuse to do so; they consent to impose privations upon themselves and to make certain sacrifices; but, they persuade themselves that they are not obliged to give up the comforts of life; that even wisdom counsels them to accom-

¹ ST. JEROME, *Epist. L, ad Nepot.*

moderate themselves to the tastes of the faithful and of their brother priests. They argue that there are precautions to be taken and care to be given, in the interest of their ministry, too; that the life of a priest is hardship enough as it is, and that if one wants to lead that life for any length of time he must moderate the rigor of it. Thus they come to regard it a duty to cater to their senses, if they are to guard their health; they give up such habits as require effort of them; they feel it a necessity or at least a matter of decency that they also be as well and comfortably housed, and attired, and nourished as another. They want no luxury; they will have what is comfortable and in keeping with their position. They do not shirk labor: but they find it right to make up for it by periods of rest and of agreeable relaxation. In place of giving to the studies that a priest's life calls for the hours not occupied otherwise, they spend them in reading merely for pleasure, in aimless going about, and in needless visiting. The habit of seeking diversion once formed, a priest finds being alone or serious occupations too irksome and boring. He goes to his books only from necessity, to write a sermon or to pass an examination. In-

sensibly he loses hold of what science and whatever distinctly clerical virtue he had acquired and had purposed to increase day by day.

4. *The love of the world.* It is not love of the world that prompts a priest to visit lay folks for the sake of their souls, or to have relations with them that one believes useful or helpful to bring them back to religious duties or to induce them to some good work. But it is love of the world to visit them and to frequent their society in a way that does not become our condition, to seek in these visits and in these dealings advantages or satisfactions that are merely natural, such as the agreeableness of being in refined and amiable society, the pleasure of entertaining, cheerful or otherwise interesting conversation, the keeping up of an honorable or even useful friendship. Such relations can be altogether innocent in themselves and even be very lawful for the laity; but they are none the less in ill accord with the spirit of our state; and they have many regrettable features. Perhaps we flatter ourselves that we are of help to those whom we thus frequent, by our amiability and mannerliness inspiring them with a love of catholic life and the practice of Christ's maxims; it is an illu-

sion. In the church, where we appear as ministers of Jesus Christ, where we speak to the faithful as the representatives of the Church, in the proper hour, these persons will listen to us with respect; they will receive our instructions with docility, but in their homes, at table, in conversation, we lose our advantage. Instead of bringing them to our way of thinking and believing, we run a real risk of being influenced by them and of imbibing their sentiments. And this is not the principal thing to be feared. Besides loss of time, and even the compromise of our priestly character, intimate relation with the world fills the mind with idle and profane ideas; it indisposes for prayer; and if, as is to be dreaded, it lead to particular friendships and sensible affection, it can easily mean detriment to our reputation and to our virtue.¹

Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt, says the Apostle. There are many things that are not forbidden us which we must deny ourselves all the same. A priest never yet failed with impunity in the proprieties of his state. For the honor of the Church and the security of your soul, be guarded on this point.

¹ *Per oculos et per aures incitamenta ad peccatum suscipiuntur, et latenter ipse assuescimus.* S. BASIL.

XXVII.

IS MODESTY MUCH TO BE DESIRED IN THE PRIEST?

1. It is a necessary virtue. His first obligation with regard to the faithful is to edify them, that is to say, to lead them towards God and to inspire them with respect for his ministry. But this he cannot do unless he have priestly reserve. "The ministers of God being placed at the head of the Church, says the Council of Trent,¹ are naturally observed of all the faithful. They are looked upon as models set up for all. If they are wanting in modesty, they give cause for disparaging comment and, instead of edifying, they give scandal. While condemning the fault in them, the people will make of it an extenuation of their own conduct, and if they fall into the same they then the more easily pardon themselves. On the other hand, if the priest be what he ought and what they really expect him to be, if modesty, priestly reserve mark his person, if it appear in his countenance, in his language, in his bearing, a reflection as it were of the holy altar, a suggestion of the presence of the Man-God, they will recognize

¹ SESS., XXII, 1.

him for what he is, the representative of their Savior: they will venerate in him the likeness of His virtues, His innocence, His charity, religion and meekness; and the disposition which this modesty supposes in the soul of the priest will surely though insensibly influence those about him. They witness to his priestliness, but they also move the faithful to profit by his example, to reproduce them in their own lives.

The life of St. Francis de Sales shows how precious is this quality in a priest and how it does good to the faithful when they behold it in him. Undoubtedly St. Francis did much good by his discourses. His utterances had heavenly power to reach hearts and bring them to God; his writings spread abroad in the minds of men light and conviction; but the very sight of him and acquaintance with his life produced still more wholesome impressions. The modesty that characterized his person, the tone of his voice, the purity of his glance, the mildness and God-like calm of his countenance were an unceasing sermon, the most compelling and attractive of all. The same could be said of him as of St. Bernard, that it was a consolation and a grace of God for anyone to

look upon him: *Solo visu laetificans et aedificans intuentes*.¹ Those who saw him retained a blessed memory and the very memory of him made men love virtue and resolve upon perfection.

2. The modesty in a priest that produces like effects must have certain qualities: it must be, like that of the saints, sincere and complete, without affectation and never failing.

(a) The modesty of holy priests never had in it aught of affectation or artificiality. It was simplicity itself. They did not edify because they sought to edify. They gave edification without thinking of it, unconsciously, quite as a light illumines; because their bearing, their language, their countenance, their mannerisms even, reflected the dispositions of their hearts and minds, and one knew, on beholding them, that in the depth of their souls was all the virtue that their being bespoke. They reminded men of the Savior for they were filled with His spirit and they lived His life. The impression created would have been very different, if their modesty had not been spontaneous, if anyone could have thought it put on, or if they had been suspected of having had

¹ *His life*, III, 2.

need first to collect and compose themselves in order to appear thus modest. To edify, as they did, the priest will have to conform his mind and heart, his inner life to theirs, and must have within him, in reality, those things of which modesty is the much admired expression.

(b) More than this, modesty, true to type, is complete, without gaps and never found wanting. It is not only at the altar, in public, or in the presence of superiors that one is modest: but everywhere; for the dispositions that engender it never vary, nor are they put on or off. Modesty comes of keeping one's self always sensible of the presence of God and by keeping alive and active the desire to please Him.

The really modest are edifying in their person, in their manner, in their language, but also in their abode and in its furnishing, in their associations. It is the perfect and constant accord of everything in them, about them, and what comes from them, that begets the high esteem that men feel for their virtue. This is what strikes one most in St. Francis de Sales. "I have observed him often," said M. Le Camus, "and never remarked that he ever once departed from the rules of strict modesty. When alone

such as he was wont to be in company, when in company just such as when alone; he maintained an evenness of bearing, quite like that of his heart. Had you beheld him at prayer, you would have said he was in the presence of angels; motionless as a pillar, with an air of deepest religion. I have observed him when alone to see, if perhaps, he crossed his knees: never. Always the same grave kindliness and meekness that endeared him to and made him respected of all who met him. His whole appearance told of true piety, innocence, cleanness of heart." He remarked once to St. Chantal that he never looked at anyone to see whether he was fair or ugly. When people were not present before him, he could never tell what they looked like.¹

Here is modesty upon which the priest will model. It is but little that his modesty make him keep guard over his eyes; he should be modest of countenance, of dress, in his carriage and conversation, at table, in his speech. Everything in him, on him, about him, ought to give the impression of a man dead to merely natural inclination, who acts ever in the light of faith and in union with Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

¹ *St. Francis of Sales, Model of Priests and of Pastors*, v, 10.

PART VI.

MEDITATIONS ON MODELS OF PRIESTLY PERFECTION.

MEDITATION I.

PREROGATIVES OF THE PRIESTHOOD—OUR LORD.

FIRST POINT. Adore the God-made-man, as the priest par excellence, and, in a sense, the only priest of the divine Majesty. The functions of the priesthood were His sole occupation while on earth. He lived and died but for the glory of God and for the sanctification of souls, and His life and death have been but one and the same sacrifice: He it is who reconciles us to the Father, blots out our iniquities, restores to us the life of grace, and sets our feet once more on the road that leads to heaven. Bless the divine Savior for having accomplished with so great devotedness this incomparable work. Make acknowledgment of the admiration, praise, and thanksgiving that are duly His for the sacrifice He has consummated: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and divinity and wisdom and fortitude and*

*honor and glory and blessing.*¹ Praise Him with all the saints of heaven and thank Him earnestly, as a Christian and as a priest, for the honor and the graces He has merited for you at the price of His most precious Blood: *Thou art worthy, O Lord, for that Thou hast been slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy Blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation: and Thou hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign upon the earth.*²

SECOND POINT. Consider the honor the Son of God does you in raising you to His priesthood, the obligations He imposes upon you, and the graces He destines for you.

1. Look first at the honor He does you. Had there been any dignity greater than that of the priesthood, would not God the Father have bestowed it upon His Son? And had there been any ministry more noble, more important, more holy, would not the Son of God have chosen it? The Eternal Father has willed to see only the priest in His Incarnate Son: *He who hath said to Him: Thou art my beloved Son, this day have I begotten Thee, hath also said to Him: Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.*³

¹ APOC., v, 12.

² APOC., v, 9.

³ HEB., v, 5.

And the Word made Flesh has not willed to exercise any other functions here on earth than those of the priesthood. He was offered a kingship; He set the honor aside. They would have made Him judge and arbiter among them; He said He was not come to concern Himself with the things of earth. To do honor to His Father, to make Him honored, to ransom the human race, to withdraw them from error and sin, to adorn, clothe men in the beauty of His grace, to give them of His life, to sacrifice Himself unreservedly for their sanctification, these were the things He proposed to Himself: this the work at which He labored constantly with all the ardor of His soul: *I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised: and how I am straightened until it be accomplished.*¹ But then, it is this very same end that is assigned you, 'tis the very same work that you are called upon to do; the self-same dignity with which you have been invested. You are to exercise the self-same ministry as Jesus Christ and you should exercise it in the self-same way. Your ordination endows you with the very same rights and gives you the very same powers. You offer the same Victim.

¹ LUKE, XII, 50.

You immolate that Victim in the same manner that He immolated in the Cenacle, according to the order of Melchisedech. You are to give to souls the same pardon, the same grace, the same nourishment. You are for the Church another Christ. *Receive power to offer sacrifice to God,*¹ she has said to you. *Sacrificium*: not a sacrifice of any sort whatsoever, but the sacrifice par excellence, the only sacrifice, the sacrifice divine which has God for its object as well as for its end. Can anyone conceive of a dignity more grand or of an occupation more sublime? *God has placed you above kings and emperors,* says a holy Doctor, *yes, even above Angels and Archangels. For as it was not Angels but the seed of Abraham that He hath taken to work His redemption, so it is not to Angels or Archangels, but to men alone and priests that He has committed the consecration of His Body and Blood.*²

2. But the burden corresponds to the dignity and the obligations are as weighty as the powers are sublime. For what ought to be the life of a priest, of the representative of Christ in His Church? Should it

¹ Pontifical, *De presb.*

² ST. BER., *In Synod.*, I, App.

not be, like that of his Master, a life of devotedness, of unselfishness, of sacrifice? Yes, for this is the instruction he receives when mounting to the altar for the first time: *Agnosce quod agitis, imitamini quod tractatis.*¹ He must give up self that he may be able to live for God from this out, that is to say, he must undo in himself not only the vices and the irregularities of passion, but as well the natural inclinations that have nothing of grace or spiritual value in them, and he must lead a life that is supernatural wholly, like that of Our Lord here on earth. You see, then, what is required of you if you are to live up to your calling. You should say just as Christ did: *I must be about my Father's business.*² *My food is to do His work.*³ and as did the Apostle: *No one of us lives for himself, neither does anyone die to himself. For whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's.*⁴

It is of little worth to adopt these sentiments, or to make these maxims your own, if you do not put them in practice by conforming your life to them: *Let not our ministry be reviled, but in all things let us show ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in*

¹ Pontifical, *De presb.*

² LUKE, II, 49.

³ JOHN, IV, 34.

⁴ ROM., XIV, 7.

*labors, in watchings, in fastings, in chastity, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in meekness, in the spirit of holiness, in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, and in the power of God.*¹ All the ministers of Jesus Christ are not subjected to the same trials as were the Apostles; all have not to make the same sacrifices, but all ought to be so disposed as to seek ever the honor of their ministry, never, to be found wanting in any of the duties which their vocation imposes upon them, and to forego, to sacrifice if need be, for the glory of God and the sanctification of their fellow-men, not only their means, their personal likes and dislikes, their affections and attachments, though the most dear, but even their health, their strength and their life: this is what St. Paul calls: *immolari supra sacrificium*, to immolate one's self together with the Victim of sacrifice.² Thus should the life of the priest be above that of the faithful, by its perfection as by its dignity; nor is there any life that requires more devotedness and generosity.

3. But the Savior also destines for His priest a very privileged sharing of His Spirit and of His graces.

¹ II COR., II, 4-8.

² PHIL., II, 17.

In conferring upon him the Sacrament of Orders, Jesus gives him an assurance of having, even to his dying day, all the helps that he can desire for the exercise of his functions and for the fulfilment of the duties of his priesthood. And he would be lacking in faith, should he fear to lack the strength needful to live in the ministry a holy priest, to be a reminder of virtue to his people, to be able to intercede efficaciously in their behalf, to sanctify their souls and to teach them how to live in the way of salvation. *If any-one say that through holy ordination the Spirit of God is not given, and that, therefore, it is idle for the Bishop to say, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, let him be anathema.*¹ The Church assures you that you can count on the help of God, and that, if you do not render yourself unworthy of it, His grace will most certainly be given you in abundance until you breathe your last. And is not this, also, what experience gives you to understand? Do you not see for yourself, the fruits of such grace in the lives of many a worthy priest? Have you not truly felt the virtue of Jesus Christ increase in your soul with every step forward you have made in your progress toward the Altar? And, since the

¹ TRID. CONC., *Sess.* 23, De Ord., Can. 4.

day you received the priestly character, above all, have you not felt a renewal, or at least the continuance of the grace of God each time you ascended to the Altar and received into your bosom the very God who makes glad your youth? Have the fullest confidence, then. Trust that Jesus will not be less good towards you in the future than He has been pleased to be in the past, or, rather, that His liberality to you will become greater and greater, according as you are the more devoted in His service and show Him more of love. Be assured that He wills to save you, and to more than save you, for that He wishes to make of you the means of sanctifying and of leading to heaven many another soul whom, also, He has destined to glory.

THIRD POINT. O glorious Virgin, Mother of the Savior of whom I am become a priest, to you I would come as did the Apostles, and, like them ask your intercession. You appreciate better than I the honor I have received, the gratitude to which I am obliged thereby and the zeal I must bestow if I am to acquit myself well of the functions that are now mine. Deign to make up for my shortcomings and to protect my soul. Thank God for me for the favor He has

done me and obtain for me of His mercy the virtues of generosity, of faithfulness, of constancy, of detachment, of penitence, of all of which I sorely feel the need. The love you bear your Son does not suffer you to look with indifference upon the needs of His ministers. I propose to have recourse each day to your protection, and to merit your interest by my faithfulness in serving you. I will have it at heart to make you known and loved by the faithful in so far as I can bring them thereto. I will commend to you all my undertakings. I will strive to imitate your virtues and to conform to your desires. And, above all, I will seek to be to you what Saint John has been, while he lived with you here on earth, so that you may be unto me what you were to him, and that you may obtain for me in heaven the crown of the priesthood, after having procured for me here below its graces and its virtues.

*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and divinity and glory and blessing. . . . Who loved us and made us a kingdom unto God and His Father, to whom be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.*¹

¹ APOC. v, 1, 2; i, 5, 6.

MEDITATION II.

HELPFUL MODELS OF THE PRIESTHOOD—SAINTLY PRIESTS.

FIRST POINT. Your first and most helpful model in the priesthood is the Man-God, the priest par excellence: *Appellatus a Deo Pontifex, juxta ordinem Melchisedech*.¹ He is always with you in the exercise of your functions, to enlighten you, to guide you and to help you. You are to be to him no longer a servant but a friend. You are to be united to Him as intimately as the branch is to the vine: *I am the vine, you are the branches*.² Hereupon depends your whole spiritual life and the fruitfulness of your labors: *Qui manet in Me, hic fert fructum multum*.³ But the Savior will not be the only one to take interest in you, to watch over you, to show you your way. You have, together with Him, for your protectors all the saints, and, in particular, the holy priests, who have had the same powers and the same obligations as you. United now in the glory of the Lamb, Whom they had immolated upon earth, they form in the midst of the elect as it were a privileged nation:

¹ HEB., v, 10.³ JOHN xv, 5.² JOHN vi, 1.

Gens sancta, genus electum, regale sacerdotium;¹ and, seeing you in the very character which consecrated them to the worship of the Divine Majesty, they regard you as one of themselves, *conservus*, and ask of God that He will deign to bless and crown your labors also. Take heart, then, and be glad in the thought of the multitude and the prestige of the protectors you have in heaven, *ad Jerusalem coelestem et Ecclesiam primitivorum qui conscripti sunt in coelis*.² Promise them that you will walk in their footsteps. Beg them ever to extend you a helping hand and to aid you in triumphing over difficulties and obstacles.

SECOND POINT. You will find nothing more instructive than the lives of holy priests; nothing more magnificent; nothing more encouraging.

1. *Nothing more instructive.* If the holy priests, whom the Church honors or whose virtue is known to you, have left any writings, if a collection of their maxims or thoughts has been made, you will do well to make a study of them. You will find therein a sure light that will show you the principles which were their guide and which you, too, ought

¹ I PETR., II, 9.

² APOC., XIX, 10.

to follow. But, should no word of theirs have been preserved, then their life will suffice to teach you what was their spirit, what they thought was required of them to live up to their vocation and to fulfil their ministry, with what fidelity they applied themselves to their exercises of piety, to the practice of virtues and to works of benevolence and of mortification, with what reserve they dealt always with the world, how guarded they were ever against dissipation, their aversion to profane curiosities and diversions, their affection for whatever could help to nourish piety and make their souls holier and more pleasing to God. *By example I learned discipline.*¹ Is it needful to read the letters of Francis Xavier in order to know what, in his eyes, was the value of a soul, or what he thought of the worth of the good things of this life in comparison with those of eternity? Even had not St. Vincent de Paul left his disciples such touching exhortations to humility, would his example not have sufficed to preach them that virtue? Had St. Francis de Sales any need to tell us of the charm of meekness and how it can aid to the triumph of virtue and to the spread

¹ PROV., XXIV, 32.

of true devotion? Do we not see it all in the story of his life? *Lectio viva sanctorum vita*, says St. Gregory the Great. And it is not only the striking traits in the lives of saints, their habitual practices, or their character that are calculated to afford us instruction: but their least word or action. "As there is not a particle of their relics but should be carefully preserved," says St. Chrysostom, "for that it has virtue to obtain for us some favor of Heaven, so there is not one of their actions but should be recounted since it can be to us an exhortation and a lesson. It is at once an exercise of piety and a profitable pastime to study before God the works He has inscribed in His book of life." As regards the lives of holy priests, in particular, besides aiding us to the practice of perfection, they have this further advantage of pointing out to us what we have to do for the sanctification of our brethren.

2. *Nothing more magnificent.* The life of a great man is always interesting. It is a pleasure to see what he did to raise himself above the level of his fellows, what it was that rendered him famous, and what influence he exercised in the world. But for a Christian who has the faith, for a cleric, the true

greatness of a man is not in his talents, in the extent of his knowledge, in the boldness of his undertakings, in the brilliant honors or renown to which he may have attained. It is in the nobleness of his sentiments and in the qualities of his soul. It consists in moral perfection, in the subjecting of his passion to duty, in perfect fidelity to the inspirations of virtue.

And true virtue, that is, for us, supernatural virtue, is what pleases God and merits His rewards, which has faith for its motives and grace for its source; that virtue of which nature is incapable, but to which the Spirit of Our Lord gives us the grace to lift up ourselves; *That loftiness of soul may be by the power of God and not of ourselves.*¹ It is this virtue that appears in holy priests and which makes up their worth and merit. The Holy Spirit Himself, source of the life of our Divine Savior, is the author of their good works: *Who worketh all things in all.*² This fact which now we take on faith will one day be revealed to us plain as day. We shall see how the Son of God lived by His Spirit in the souls of His saints on earth, how He lives in the hearts of the blessed

¹ II COR., IV, 7.

² I COR., XII, 6.

in heaven; and this will be one of the joys of our eternal happiness: *Beloved we are now sons of God; but not yet does it appear what we shall be.*¹ *In that day you shall know that I am in the Father and you in Me and I in you.*² It is then we shall appreciate the real excellence of the Christian and how truly perfect are the holy ones of God. We shall then understand to what height an Apostle like St. Paul, a missionary like St. Francis Xavier, a pastor like St. Charles, a martyr like the Blessed Perboyre, have lifted themselves above the rarest of geniuses, the most illustrious of savants, the most famous of conquerors. Between the one and the other, there is the distance of earth to heaven, or of nature to grace.

3. *Nothing more encouraging.* If one had ever before his eyes only the Son of God, who is the Holiest of holy ones, the great High Priest, one might be tempted to believe that he is not made for the priesthood and that even there is no one among creatures who may lawfully pretend thereto: one might then say to himself with less of humility than of discouragement; *Ad haec quis tam idoneus?*³ The biography

¹ JOHN, III, 2.

² JOHN, XIV, 20.

³ II COR., II, 16.

of a holy priest, the study of his life and virtue will rid one of such an illusion. It will make clear that God has always had here, upon earth, worthy ministers; that the grace of Orders is real and powerful; that there is nothing of obligation in the priesthood a worthy priest cannot by its help fulfil; no degree of sanctity that it will not enable him to attain. And this thought or assurance will not only preserve one from discouragement, but will animate, stimulate, incite one to personal effort towards realizing that ideal of priestly worthiness and perfection that one may thus conceive. When beholding all the good that St. Vincent de Paul accomplished, all the unfortunates that owe to his care and zeal both their lives and their salvation, who but will say to himself: "Cannot I, then, do some little thing for the honor of God and for the welfare of my fellows?"¹ When reading the account of the travels, the labors, the perils that so many missionaries had and have the courage to undertake and brave that they might bring the faith to poor infidels, it is enough to bring a blush of shame to our brow to reflect how we hesitate at the least sacrifice or balk at the least discom-

¹ ST. AUG., *Conf.*, ix, 2.

fort required of us for the conversion of the unbelievers and sinners in the midst of whom we live. Considering what has been done for the honor of God and the consolation of Mother Church by the humble Curé of Ars, in other words, humanly speaking, by the most poor and lowly pastor of the poorest parish in all France, how may anyone pretend to believe himself incapable of doing any good in a parish of better promise, with means considerably more potent and in a position incomparably better? The lives of holy priests are, then, a prolific seed of priestly holiness.

THIRD POINT. Strive to stir up some aspirations to perfection within you at the sight of so many holy priests who have gone before you in the ministry and who now reign in everlasting bliss. Note how numerous they are. No week passes but the Church makes you do honor to one or more of them. Attend to the resumé of their lives which you read in the breviary; but, more than this, cultivate a liking for the reading of the lives of such as have been written more at length. Reflect, in particular, on the example of such as have lived in these latter days, in conditions similar to yours. And you will hear, in

the depths of your heart, the Holy Spirit speaking to you as to St. Augustine; "Why cannot you do as these have done; and if you can do so, why will you not do it?" Let communion with these worthy priests be a consolation to you in the lonesomeness, isolation you must sometimes feel or be obliged to keep. Their society is of a nature to more than make up for the loss or the fore-going of that of others. And do not content yourself merely with frequenting them or communicating in spirit with them. Invoke them; lay claim to their aid and their intercession before God. These are the protectors that it is worth your while to cultivate, to whom you can recommend yourself without hesitation, unabashed: *Make to yourself friends by venerating the holy ones of God and by imitating their deeds. Cultivate their friendship. The prayer of one saint in heaven is of more worth to you than the visits of all the friends the world can afford you.*¹

¹ IMIT., I, 23.

MEDITATION III.

THE APOSTLE ST. PAUL.

FIRST POINT. Honor in St. Paul one of the truest models of priestly perfection and one of the most admirable prodigies of divine grace. He is the Apostle par excellence, he who was chosen to crown the work of the twelve witnesses to the Savior and to bear His Name to the utmost bounds of the known world. Though God did not bring him forth from nothingness, properly speaking, He did draw him from an abyss still more profound, from the blindest pharisaism, and the most violent. But in revealing to him the divinity of His Son, He transformed him entirely. He dispelled the darkness of his mind and calmed the turbulent impulses of his heart: *Who commanded the light to shine in the darknesses, He hath made to shine in our hearts the illuminating knowledge of Christ Jesus.*¹ Thus He gave to His Church a striking assurance of the triumph that was to be hers over Judaism and idolatry. At the same time, He prepared for His future ministers a model whom they cannot but admire and according to whom they may form themselves until the end of time. So, too, has

¹ II COR., IV, 6.

God seen to it that his life should be written and preserved in a much more perfect way than that of any other Apostle. The Lord was not content that the pen of an Evangelist should recount for us the principal facts thereof; He wished that the man himself reveal his most secret dispositions, his inmost soul and that he leave us in his inspired letters a most faithful portrayal of his mind and heart; and the Church, entering into His design, obliges her ministers to read each day some passage of them either at holy Mass or in the Office, that they may come to know all his traits and never lose them to mind. Thank your Divine Master for having thus provided for the edification of His clergy and for the spiritual welfare of your own soul. Ask of Him the grace to profit by this help and to learn of His Apostle what you have yet to do if you are to share in his merits in this life and in his reward in the life to come: *Deus qui universum mundum Beati Pauli apostoli predicatione docuisti, da nobis, quaesumus, ut qui ejus merita colimus, per ejus ad te exempla gradiamur.*¹

SECOND POINT. There are three virtues most prominent in the life of St. Paul, which three we ought

¹ OFF. CONVERS. ST. PAULI.

endeavor most to imitate: his devotion to Our Savior, his zeal for souls and his humility.

1. The love of our Lord is the very soul of this Apostle. No sooner did he come to know the Divine Master than he loved him with a perfect love and wished to live only for Him. His every moment, all his strength, his full ardor were consecrated to His service, to propagating His doctrine and to extending His reign: *But when it pleased Him, who called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, forthwith I condescended not to flesh and blood. . . . But the brethren had heard only: He who persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith.*¹

“For whom else could I live,” he adds, “what other master could I serve, when I know that He loved me first and that He gave Himself up to death for my salvation. *Quod ego vivo in fide, in fide vivo Filii Dei, qui dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me.*”² Not only for Him do I live and rule my life by his faith, but I know that He lives in me, that He is the soul of my soul and the life of my life: *I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me.*³ Ah! who can take from me

¹ GAL., I, 16, 23.

² *Ibid.*

³ GAL., II, 29.

this treasure divine! What power can snatch me from His love or break the bond which unites me to to Him? *Quis nos separabit a caritate Christi? Tribulatio, an angustia, an fames, an gladius?* No, I am sure that no persecution, no trial, no sword will ever be capable of that: *For I am certain that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, neither things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature can separate us from the love of God which is Christ Jesus our Lord.*"¹ And these were not vain words on the part of St. Paul: his whole history attests that his conduct corresponded with his language, and that neither in life nor in death did the love of his Savior ever weaken in its complete possession of his heart. *For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord.*² *Thanks be to God, who makes us ever to triumph in Christ Jesus.*³ It would be easy for you to recall here many more such attestations. But it will be more to the purpose to see what share you have in such sentiments. A minister of Jesus Christ like the Apostle, you yourself have been the object of His

¹ ROM., VIII, 35-39.

² II COR., II, 14.

³ ROM., XIV, 8.

predilection. Ought you not then to be moved with a sense of gratitude equal to his? If you have not been brought from unbelief, like St. Paul, were you not by the same mercy led back from wanderings astray that were more culpable still? *Gratias Deo qui dignos nos fecit in partem sortis sanctorum!*¹ Woe to him who is insensible to such great mercies! Woe to him who will not love with a whole heart, when he has been and is still the object of so great a love! *If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema!*²

2. The love of the Apostle for Our Lord was, above all, a love of devotedness and of generosity. Seeing that the Son of God had sacrificed and suffered all things for the salvation of his soul and for the redemption of the world, he wished to sacrifice all to testify to Him his gratitude, and to undertake all to complete His work, that is to say, to deliver souls from the tyranny of the demon and to make of them a trophy to his Redeemer. "Since God has made me an Apostle to the Gentiles, said he, I wish to honor my ministry by making it fruitful. Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel! I am a debtor to all, as I

¹ COL., I, 12.

² I COR., XVI, 22.

well know, to the Gentiles as to the Jews, to the Barbarians as to the Greeks, to the ignorant as to the learned. And hence, there is nothing that I am not ready to fore-go if only I may spread the Gospel and increase the number of the elect: *Omnia sustineo propter electos, ut ipsi salutem consequantur*.¹ Blessed be the Father of mercies, who fills us with consolations, that we may console and encourage all our brethren! For I have no concern or ardor but for their sanctification; and all my desire is to present to my Savior the Churches I have formed as so many brides worthy of His love: *Aemulor enim vos Dei aemulatione virginem castam exhibere Christo*!² Also, when I think upon the future I hardly know what most to desire; and if my fate should rest with me, I should hesitate to choose between life and death. To quit this world and go to heaven and be in the kingdom of Jesus Christ would truly be a gain to me; but is it not needful that I remain here below, to provide for the wants of the Church and to help many souls to sanctify themselves? I will go, then, to Jesus for He is my end and my joy; but I will go to Him by the way of labor and the apostolate, following all its

¹ II TIM., II, 10.

² II COR., XI, 2.

weary length the path He has trodden before me. I will force myself to advance day by day, not counting at all the progress I have made, considering only that which is yet for me to do: *Unum autem, quae quidem retro sunt obliviscens, ad ea vero quae sunt priora extendens meipsum, ad destinatum persequor, ad bravium supernae vocationis Dei in Christo Jesu.*¹ Thus you see, herein, something of the sentiments of the Apostle, of the labors he has undertaken, of the sufferings he has endured, of the fruits he has produced. He has accomplished more than any other for the service of the Master, but he has also suffered more than anyone else. Such is the law of the apostolate. God wills that the ministers of Jesus Christ purchase their success, like their Master, at the price of weary labor and sufferings. You cannot be an exception to this rule. If you propose to do any good, to convert souls, to make them holy, bestir yourself to effort, take the trouble, and be zealous: *Docete, praedicate, contendite.* Say with St. Paul: *I will willingly spend and be spent.*² He gathers not who does first sow or water or reap in the sweat of his brow.

¹ PHIL., III, 14.² II COR., XII, 15.

3. And is it not to be marveled at, that, ardent as was the zeal of the Apostle, his humility was no less sincere and deep. Loaded with merits and with glory, wondered at for his miracles, venerated for his virtues, blessed for his benefactions, listened to as an oracle, obeyed as an angel from heaven, he still regards himself as the least and last among his brethren, *abortivus novissimus apostolorum, tametsi nihil sum*, as the greatest of sinners, *primus peccatorum*, as one who fears lest he yet become a castaway, *ne forte reprobus efficiar*. He is convinced that His Savior has, out of pure mercy, called him to the Christian faith; that he is incapable, Apostle and all as he is, of doing the least good thing of himself; that he cannot even conceive one good thought, nor utter a good word; that, whatever he may have done for the cause of Christ, the grace of the Savior has accomplished all through him: *Non ego autem, sed gratia Dei mecum*.¹ And more! the fame of his preaching and the honor of his name are a burden to him. He finds his pleasure only in humiliation; He glories only in his infirmities. He prefers to recall only those things that are calculated to lower him in the estimation of the faithful

¹ I COR., XV, 10.

and make him be looked upon as the least and lowest among the ministers of God. *For I am not worthy to be called an Apostle, since I persecuted the Church of God. I who was of old a blasphemer and a persecutor and contumelious.*¹ Humility, such as this, is surely to be admired and cannot fail to leave its impression on anyone who thinks upon it. If a saint, if an Apostle, if St. Paul, who has such great honor and such surpassing merit before God and men, humbled himself thus before the whole Church, what might be expected of ourselves; of us who have but little either of his worth or works! We should humble ourselves in some proportion to our shabby wretchedness and need, but, we know well enough that we do only the contrary. If we bear any resemblance to St. Paul, is it not in the first part of his life, while he was yet imbued with the spirit of the Pharisees? Instead of having a liking for humiliation or for obscurity, are we not on the lookout for the least distinction, consideration, honor, *et in primis cathedris sedere et vocari ab hominibus Rabbi?*² Have a care against this spirit, says Our Savior: *Beware of the*

¹ II COR., XV, 9; I TIM., I, 13.

² MATT., XXIII, 4-6.

leaven of the Pharisees.¹ *Quod hominibus altum est, abominatio est ante Deum.*²

THIRD POINT. Reflect that St. Paul is not only the most illustrious of the Apostles, but that he is also an admirable pattern of priestly perfection; one of those whom it is of real importance you should study most and invoke. Too often, one seems to see in the saints of those early times only historic personages, whose activity and influence endured only with their life. One has no thought of invoking their spirit or of soliciting their aid. Yet, nothing is more reasonable. Since they are saints and have practised virtue in its perfection we should not cease to honor and imitate them: *aut imitandi sunt, aut non colendi*. Since they are the chosen ones of our Savior and enjoy His friendship and share in His kingship, it is worth while to invoke them, to have recourse to them, to ask, through their intercession, the graces of which we have need if we are to walk in their footsteps. To study the language of St. Paul, his characteristics, his turn of mind, to prove the genuineness of his Epistles, to reduce to a system all his dogmatic and moral assertions; this is all very well, but, is it not

¹ MATT., XVI, 6, 11.

² LUKE X, 15.

of greater import to study his virtues, to penetrate one's self with his spirit, to fill one's mind with his thoughts? This is what his disciples Timothy and Titus did, and this is what the bishop invites us to do when he thus prays for those ordained to the priesthood: *That instructed in these doctrines which Paul gave to Timothy and to Titus, they may believe what they shall have read, that they expound what they shall have come to believe, and what they believe they may practice.*¹

MEDITATION IV.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

FIRST POINT. Our Savior is the model of all holiness, but particularly of priestly holiness. His priests are not holy except in so far as they bear resemblance to Him or in proportion to the share they have in His Spirit and His virtues. *Quos praescivit conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui, hos et vocavit, justificavit, glorificavit.*² And this can be perceived very sensibly in St. Vincent de Paul. He not only represented the Savior in his ministry, in the sense that, being invested with the same priesthood, he exer-

¹ Pontif., *De Presb.*

² ROM., VIII, 29.

cised the same functions and worked to the same end, but he represented Him still further in his person, in his character, in his virtues, in his conduct: When I name Jesus, says St. Bernard, I think of a Man meek, humble of heart, kindly, sober of mien, chaste, remarkable, in fine, for all manner of goodness and holiness."¹ This is quite the idea one forms of St. Vincent de Paul, and the very one that his historians, his works, and his discourses give of him. For Our Savior was the constant object of his thoughts and of his love. The saint was ever pondering in his mind His example and His maxims. He was by habit always in union with Jesus, and kept alive in his heart a sense of complete dependence upon Him. He was indeed the branch growing from the vine, drawing from it all its sap and vigor. Passing no judgment, uttering no word, placing no act but in Him and through Him, he could say with St. Paul that Jesus Christ was his very life: *Mihi vivere Christus est.*² Also, could he rightfully say with St. Paul: *Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ.* Take his advice in this, and, in order to conform thereto, ask the Holy Spirit to give you the knowledge of what most con-

¹ *In Cant.*, xxv.

² *GAL.*, II, 20.

tributed to develop in him so true an image of the Savior.

SECOND POINT. Three virtues have contributed more than all else to make St. Vincent strikingly like Our Lord: they are his self-denial, his spirit of faith and his charity towards his neighbor.

1. St. Vincent was not only master of himself and above all inclinations of mere nature: he was so mortified a man, he had so effectively and completely repressed both humors and likings that he was quite without self-will and in him the old man seemed to have lost all vigor and energy. Never was he seen to make a movement or to say a word out of curiosity, love of comfort, or natural instinct. Nor did he ever take a single step or move a hand in order to procure for himself any consideration, favor, or esteem whatsoever. At no time did he either give counsel, or take a side with a view to his own personal interest. His person, his interests, his likes and dislikes counted for nothing with him. The same can be said of him as of Our Savior: *Non sibi placuit. Sed semetipsum exinanivit.* The things that mattered with him, as with Jesus, were the interests, the glory, the good pleasure of the Divine Majesty:

Quae placita sunt ei. He, therefore, fulfilled, in the most complete manner, the condition which the Master lays down for those who would walk in His footsteps: *If anyone will come after me let him deny himself.*¹

2. Anyone that will conduct himself wisely, becomingly, according to the dignity of man, must consult and follow reason. He must not allow himself to be actuated, as a child, by blind instincts or by unreflecting impulse. But the Christian cannot be content with merely doing what reason or the world would approve and with avoiding all irregularity of conduct. Since he is become through Baptism an enlightened child of God, having a share in His spirit, he must live a life that is superhuman and, in some sense, divine. He has the power to do it; for it depends upon himself whether he shall live as a child of God, conformably to the views and good pleasure of God: *My just man lives by faith*, says the Lord.² Such was the life of St. Vincent de Paul. When he gave a decision, accomplished any deed, spoke any word, it was only after consulting his faith and with

¹ MATT., XVI, 24.

² ROM., I, 17; GAL., III, 10; HEB., X, 38.

the assurance that he was observing its maxims. And whenever he had to take any new measure or give an important bit of advice, he was always seen to recollect himself in the presence of God, to ask himself what God would prefer, or what would Our Savior do in his place. Then, signing himself with the cross, he gave his advice or set about the thing to be done, *in nomine Domini*. Thus, thanks to this spirit of faith, his life was altogether supernatural, altogether Christian, abundantly full of merits for heaven. And Our Lord, concurring ever by His light and by the motion of His grace in whatsoever the saint did, became the very principle of his activity even more than was His servant himself.

3. But, among all the actions that faith can inspire in a Christian, which are the most perfect? Are they not acts of charity, that is to say, acts of love of God considered in Himself or in His adopted children? And these are what continually preoccupied the mind and filled the life of St. Vincent. You can read in his life in what manner he was charitable, whether as regards God, through the divine Sacrifice, the divine Office and the practices of piety, or with regard to his neighbor, towards whosoever had

recourse to him and, in particular, towards the poor. Nothing could alter his purity of intention or divide his affection. He loved nothing unless in God and for God. He undertook nothing except with Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. Such was his charity, that, no matter what he did to satisfy it, it always seemed to him all too little and he always desired to do a hundred times as much. There was no sacrifice for which he was not ready; no trouble or annoyance that he did not cheerfully accept if so he might be of assistance to his brethren. It is a marvel, the numbers of unfortunates to whom he had the consolation of rendering a service, even in regions far distant. For he scarce made any distinction between fellow-countrymen and strangers: he saw in all, the creatures of God, souls redeemed by the precious Blood of his Savior. And never did the pity which the wretched inspired in him remain an idle sentiment. He impoverished himself to get them nourishment; despoiled himself to clothe others; he had himself fastened in irons in the place of captives; and was eager to give his life to save martyrs. He did not think that too much could ever be done for these whom God calls His own and gives the in-

heritance of heaven. And if he could refuse them nothing that would relieve their bodies, what could he begrudge them or did he not seek to do for their souls' sake? This, too, was the spirit with which he inspired all his own missionaries whom he sent into the provinces made desolate by war or into the heathen lands, the religious whom he banded together and formed, after his own heart, to the care of the sick and the orphans, for the instruction of children, and for the reclamation of those fallen into vice. Oh! what devotedness there was in that heart, and how many are the holy works of which it has been the source! Oh! what good a priest can do, if he but be a man of God, if he live only for His service and love.

THIRD POINT. Thank God for having given to the Church, so perfect an exemplar of what a priest should be. No one has rendered more honor and glory to God in these latter days. No one has better served the Church. No one has left to his own a more glorious or a more dear memory. Ask Our Lord to inspire you with true devotion to this holy priest; ask Him to impress upon your heart and mind his maxims and example. Though his sanctity is eminent, it is yet one of the most encouraging models

and the most practical that a priest can choose. His life was spent in conditions very like to those of the average ecclesiastic, and God has been pleased to sanctify him by the very means that are within the easy reach of all, rather than by revelations and miracles. The very things he possessed in the highest degree, are the self-same things that are most needed today, or rather, today more than ever, for accomplishing good: the virtues of faith, detachment, humility, compassion, and of devotedness to all the bodily and spiritual needs of our neighbor. Pray Our Savior to give you a share in these virtues and offer yourself sincerely to His Spirit to practise them: *Put ye on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience. But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection: and let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts.*¹

*O God, Who unto Blessed Vincent didst give apostolic virtue for the preaching of the Gospel to the poor and for promoting the honor of the priestly order, graciously grant, that we, who venerate his piety and merits, may gain instruction by the example of his virtues, through Christ our Lord.*²

¹ COL., III, 12-15.

² BREV.

MEDITATION V.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

FIRST POINT. Adore the Son of God-made-Man, as the supreme head of the Church, as the One Who calls and Who prepares, for the government of His faithful, the ministers necessary to their sanctification, *quosdam quidem apostolos, quosdam autem prophetas, alios vero pastores et doctores ad consummationem sanctorum, ad aedificationem corporis Christi*.¹ The needs of the Church and of souls being varied, those who are destined to see to them do not all receive the same gifts: *Alii quidem datur sermo sapientiae, alii sermo scientiae, alteri fides aut operatio virtutum*.² Each one has grace in accord with his vocation. Hence it is that a certain number receive more, or share more abundantly in the riches of the Savior. St. Francis de Sales is one of those who have had a larger share. He was not only a holy priest and a devoted pastor: he was, besides, a learned Doctor and a writer of the first order. Admired as a preacher and as a controversialist, he was still more esteemed and sought after as a confessor and a director

¹ EPH., IV, 12.² I COR., XII, 6, 10.

of souls. He loved the poor and God gave him to feel much consolation in the ministry he exercised towards them; but he labored mostly, with the blessing of Heaven, among the rich and the great. The highest of them were under his benign influence. Princes themselves admired his wisdom and praised his sanctity. He was truly the ideal priest. Wherefore has St. Vincent de Paul proposed him as a living image of the Savior, and his memory still is enshrined in admiration, love and veneration universal. Offer him your heart-felt homage, and rejoice with him in the faithful consecration he made of all his faculties and strength to the service of Our Lord. May he obtain for you the grace to serve the Master with a like devotion and with the same blessings!

SECOND POINT. You will do well to imitate St. Francis in everything, but particularly in his zeal for the conversion of sinners, in his preaching of the faith and in the direction of souls.

1. The first years of his ministry were consecrated to the conversion of heretics. Of all sinners, they were the hardest to lead back to God. Deprived of the light of faith, brought up in the hatred of the Church and her ministers, obstinate in their errors,

they saw in him, at first, only a seducer who sought to bring them under the ancient yoke. They were determined, not only not to yield to his words, but to treat him as a foe and to discourage his zeal. And, indeed, his many friends adjudged his efforts as attempts at the impossible and even he was thought more to compromise religion than to convert heretics. St. Francis thought otherwise. He reflected that God willed their salvation and would not refuse them the grace of which they had need in order to know the truth and to return to Him. He recalled to himself the reply of the Apostle of the Gentiles when he was reproached with purposing to be their evangelist: *Fides ex auditu. Quomodo credent sine praedicante?*¹ He knew that God can make docile children of the most hardened sinners, and, even if he were not worthy that God should renew in his favor the prodigies of the Apostles, at least he would have the merit of having walked in their footsteps and of having imitated them. He had need of great constancy, for he was obliged to wait long for the fruits of his zeal to appear; yet, far from being discouraged, he redoubled his charity, mildness, and con-

¹ Rom., x, 4.

descension. To preaching he added much prayer and mortification, till finally it pleased God to grant his desires and to touch the heart of that poor people. From that time on, hindrances vanished, dispositions changed; and the number of conversions surpassed all hopes. Happy the people whose pastors do not content themselves with mere watching over the fold, but are eager always to go seek after the sheep that are gone astray! Happy the pastors who labor at the conversion of sinners with such purity of purpose and the same generosity and who deserve to obtain of heaven by their prayers that which they feel themselves incapable of effecting by their own strength!

2. St. Francis de Sales had a not a whit less zeal for the sancification of the pious faithful than he evinced for the conversion of sinners. If he loved to prove to unbelievers the truth of the Catholic faith, he loved still more to explain its mysteries to docile souls and to bring them to a fuller practice of its maxims. No one ever dispensed the word of God with more liberality and no one was ever listened to with more relish when in the pulpit than he. One can see in his biography the almost incredible number of sermons, exhortations, allocutions of every sort

which he delivered in France as well as in Savoy, and the eagerness of people to hear him in Paris as in Annecy. But what is more remarkable still, is the concept he had of preaching, the dispositions of his mind and heart when preaching, and the end he proposed to himself, the simplicity, the piety, and the charity with which he spoke to the faithful. There is, on this subject, a long letter written by himself to the Archbishop of Dijon, who had asked counsel of him. One doesn't know, in reading it, which to admire the most: the finesse of his mind, the solidity of his judgment, the ardor of his zeal, or the perfection of his virtue. True pastor, still more than preacher, he had wished to preach without ceasing, not for the sake of being listened to, but to make God loved and virtue practised. Almost every year, he preached the Lenten and Advent discourses in some parish, and scarce a day went by that he did not ascend the pulpit. "I am marvellously listened to here," he wrote to St. Chantal during one of his missions; "but, indeed, I am preaching with all my heart." And, addressing a young priest, who had neither the same love of preaching, nor the same facility: "Begin," said he,

"begin soon to do that which you will always have to do. The sooner you commence, the sooner you will succeed. Preach often: for there is no other secret of becoming a preacher. Seek the glory of God without bothering about yourself. But don't be over-solicitous: if we forget ourselves to think of God, God will be mindful of us and will bless our efforts." He recommended, above all else, a right intention. He wished that, in going into the pulpit, every priest would say to himself as did Our Lord: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant*. "And, after that, let them beware of long periods, of grand gesticulation, and all oddities or singularities of movement or bearing; this is the plague of preaching. The tongue wags in vain when it is not moved by charity. I love the preaching that breathes charity rather than indignation. I love it better when it is brief. The more you say, the less is retained. It is better to return to the matter later and renew the good remarks or observations: *Nunquam satis dicitur quod nunquam satis discitur*." Reflect upon these wise sayings. See if they are not still today the wisest you have heard. What if all preachers were animated with

this spirit and conformed their utterances to these rules?

3. But it is in the direction of souls that St. Francis is incomparable. God Himself pointed him out to St. Chantal as the most excellent master of the perfect Christian life. She had long asked of Heaven a spiritual guide, who would be truly holy and who would help her to become holy herself. Of a sudden one day, she saw, at some distance in front of her, an ecclesiastic vested in soutane and rochet, just as she beheld at Dijon, shortly afterward, the Bishop of Geneva. And while she looked admiringly she heard a voice that said to her: "Here is the guide well-beloved of God and of men, to whose hands you ought to trust your soul." Before very long the saint knew by experience he was indeed such as she had long wished for and had been promised her, a man of true holiness, who had no other concern but to make her to know and to accomplish the will of God. And the regard which she bore him only increased as she came to know him better. "I saw that God dwelt in his soul," she says, "in such plenitude, that I never looked upon him without feeling the presence of God. I would have held it

a happiness to abandon all the things of this world, and to do the least and lowest duties of his house, if I might but refresh my soul with the words of life that were ever falling from his lips." It was in the same spirit and with the same purity of intention that St. Francis de Sales directed all that had recourse to him. Never did he show the least eagerness to undertake the direction of anyone soever; and he never suffered anyone to come to him with any other purpose than to sanctify himself in doing the will of God. In his dealings with lay folk, and in the advice he gave them, one can note even greater wisdom and discretion. Natural inclination, curiosity, self-seeking had no place in his heart.

With mildness he combined so much dignity and with simplicity such loftiness of mind, together such respect for others and for himself that he was regarded as an angel of God. "I believe," said St. Chantal, "that it is impossible to find a man more wise, more kind and more modest in his language as well as in his conduct." God alone knows how many souls he has gained to heaven, what acts of virtue he made them to accomplish and

what help he has been to them in the work of their sanctification.

THIRD POINT. Since you are honored with the same priesthood as St. Francis de Sales, arouse a desire to use as he did the powers you have received. Take the resolution to preach the Gospel for the sole glory of God, with such zeal, simplicity and charity as you are capable of. Love sinners as he did, that you may gain them to God: desire to render yourself, like him, useful to the just by teaching them the practice of virtue and the ways of perfection. Have this saint as your counsellor and model in the holy Tribunal and in the pulpit, as well as in all the various relations of your ministry. And study him well: try to conceive a just notion of his doctrine and of his virtues. Be not of those superficial, narrow minds, who see only meekness in him and think that they resemble him when they are but minimizing principles and tolerating abuses. St. Francis was meek and mild, but he was strong, too; he knew how to say: *Non licet*; he did not hesitate to expose his life on occasion, or to require sacrifices. If he spoke most to souls of the love of God, and of the consolations of piety, he did not

ask the less (like all the saints) the crucifixion of the old man and the death of all his concupiscences.

*O God, Who for the salvation of souls, wert pleased that Blessed Francis Thy confessor and pontiff should become all things to all men: grant mercifully, that we, filled by the sweetness of Thy love, may, by following his counsels and by the help of his merits, attain unto joys everlasting. Through Christ Our Lord.*¹

MEDITATION VI.

ST. ALPHONSUS LIGOURI.

FIRST POINT. Like St. Francis de Sales and like many others, St. Ligouri seemed to have a place clearly marked out for him in the world. The condition of his family, the designs of his parents, the education he had received, the qualities with which he was naturally endowed, seemed to fix his duty there and not in the Church. Fortune, honors and success were to be his. But God had offered him these advantages only to show him what futile things they are and to give him the merit of making the sacrifice of them all. He made it in good time,

¹ BREVIARY, JAN. 29.

quite as soon as he was in a position to dispose of affairs himself; then he did it with perfect generosity. And though everything combined to make the forming of his determination and the execution of it painful for him, still all the obstacles had only this effect: to bestir his ardor and to increase his virtue. He resolved to belong to God only and without reserve. To give up a fortune and to fore-go the comforts of life cost him but little; but he had, at the same time, to suffer estrangement from his family. He made this last sacrifice, nevertheless, and made it more generously than all the rest. He renounced the affection of his parents together with their society. And to ensure faithfulness to grace, he embraced a life of poverty and devoted himself to the practice of heroic humility and mortification. This meant, of course, the giving of himself over to censure and contempt. He was an object of suspicion to his friends as well as to those among whom he lived. He was held by them an indiscreet man, lacking wisdom and shaping poorly for the future; who would bring dishonor to his name by his imprudence and his strong-headedness. The saint put up with it all, content to be found faithful to his Master and to

walk like Him in the way of suffering. In the end, trials of this sort ceased; hindrances fell away. Men began to realize that he was being led by the Spirit of God, and that, in quitting the world, he had taken the better course: they came to comment on his virtue. In other words, there came to pass what we behold every day. When a young man makes a great sacrifice for God, the first fruit he is sure to reap from it is unkindly or unfavorable criticism and belittling remarks; but let him have patience and persevere, and the judgment of men will not be slow to change; for, what at first they disparaged, they will at length admire and praise. Acknowledge in this the wisdom of God, Who will have all His chosen ones pass this same way, that they may die to themselves by humility and mortification, before they can serve to His glory and the good of His Church. Pray that He may be pleased to deal so with you and ask of Him to give you an understanding and a relish of these words of Holy Writ: *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation. Join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter day.*¹

¹ ECCLI., II, 1, 3.

SECOND POINT. In the life of St. Alphonsus there are three things that are most to be remarked: his love for Our Lord and for the Blessed Virgin, his devotion to souls, and his application to clerical studies. And these are so many examples that you must imitate.

1. The love this saint bore his Redeemer was the great inspiration and motif of his life. The books he has written in honor of the God-made-Man, on the mysteries of His life, on His passion, on the divine Sacrifice, on the most blessed Sacrament, breathe a piety so sincere and a devotion so ardent, they evince so earnest a desire to make his divine Savior known, honored and loved, that one can feel how truly the heart of the author was aflame with that love. And one is not surprised to read in the story of his life that he was never happier than when preaching his Redeemer's sublime life and virtues, or that his zeal for the worship of the Cross was so untiring. One can understand the fervor with which he celebrated the holy Sacrifice, and all that he undertook for the establishment and propagation of devotion to the Holy Eucharist. "My dear brethren," said he in a discourse to the

religious of the Order he founded, "the first thing I recommend to you, is the love of Our Divine Savior. Let us never forget the motives that oblige us to that love. It was to place us in a position to fulfil perfectly this duty that from all eternity He has chosen us for the priesthood and led us into this community. And He has thereby made it of obligation for us to love Him with our full heart and to labor at making Him so loved by others." And in closing, he said: "I must make an end; yet I would wish never to end, so keen is the desire I feel to see inflamed with love of Jesus each and every one of you, and to be able to think that you will make up to Him the ingratitude He so much knows in these unhappy times." His devotion to the Blessed Mother of God was like to that he cherished for her Son. The special favors he had received from the Blessed Virgin inspired deep gratefulness in his soul. He sought to engrave her name on every heart. He made a vow that he would preach in her honor every Saturday, and each of his retreats he brought to a close with a like discourse. It was through Mary that he offered all his prayers to God; to her he referred the honor of all his works;

and it was through her intercession that he hoped to enter into the possession of heaven.

2. The love of St. Ligouri towards Our Lord prompted him to neglect nothing that would make His merits and graces fruitful in souls. He felt that he never could do too much for those whom the Son of God had purchased with His Blood; and, like the beloved Apostle, it was by his deeds, still more than by his words, that he believed he must show his love. All Christians were equally dear to him, for he beheld in all the likeness of the Son of God; but those who interested him most were the unfortunate, the neglected, and the abandoned. From the beginning of his priesthood he tended to the poor and the beggars; and then to the dwellers in the country. The abandonment in which he found so many of these wretched folk and his utter helplessness to effectually relieve their condition, inspired him to found in their behalf a new Order; whence the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. One must read his biography and a considerable part of his correspondence in order to have any adequate idea of what it cost him to establish his society, to get it recognized, to give it rules, to

govern its members, to direct and bring its first labors to a happy issue. And one will see therein what courage he put into his work, what self-denial, what prudence, firmness and zeal he displayed, and what other manifold gifts God had vouchsafed him for the accomplishment of this great undertaking, and all the fruits of grace and salvation that it is has been given him to produce. By this example, also, one can learn at what cost good is done upon earth. For nothing is accomplished without the pain of toil, without generosity, without confidence in God, without perseverance; but, on these conditions, every work, of which grace is the source or principle, is at length firmly established and gives forth fruit in due season.

3. A third quality to be admired in St. Ligouri, is his application to clerical studies. Early in life he had made a vow to employ his time wholly in the service of God and never to lose deliberately an instant of it. Up to the age of eighty-nine he was faithful to his engagement. He took neither repose nor recreation nor any reading for the sake of mere pleasure. From the beginning of the day till its close he was always occupied. When he had not to

preach, to prepare a mission, to hear confessions or to perform some other function of his ministry, he still found work to do. Holy Scripture, the Fathers and theologians, the spiritual writers, one after another, were in his hands. While in the course of his reading, he took notes and composed treatises. Until his last years, when he was obliged to keep to his bed, he read, dictated, composed scientific and pious treatises for the instruction of the faithful and for the edification of the clergy. It will afford astonishment to anyone to run over the list of works theological, ascetical, historical, apologetic, that he published in the intervals between his preachings and his sicknesses. And what is the more surprising, is the erudition and the research that the greater part of his books must have required; for example, particularly, his *Moral Theology*, composed for his own instruction and for that of his religious, but soon happily spread broadcast throughout the Church. Herein is indeed a beautiful example of the application one can give to study and of the good that can come of study in one's ministry, be it ever so busy or laborious.

THIRD POINT. Here again hast Thou given me the grace, O my God, to contemplate the example of one of Thy priests, whose name I shall often meet with, the thought of whom must often come to my mind, whose books many a time I shall need to turn to and whose teachings I shall have to hand on to others. I pray that his memory may be to me always an exhortation and an example: that his *Moral Theology* and his *Practice of the Confessional* may be an incentive to study and a reminder to me of the importance of applying myself to it. May his works of piety, *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament, On the Passion, On all the Mysteries*, nourish my devotion towards Our Lord and induce me to do something also for His glory. May his beautiful tributes to the Virgin Mother increase my trust in her. In fine, may the intercession of the saintly Bishop obtain of Thee for me all the many helps I need if I am to imitate him and arrive at the glory he now enjoys. I wish to retain these two maxims of his, which have always made a deep impression upon me:

1. A priest who has the spirit of his calling should be disposed to suffer anything, even to allow himself

to be mangled to death, rather than deliberately commit a single venial sin, be it ever so trivial.¹

2. *Affirmo in statu damnationis esse confessarium qui sine sufficienti scientia ad confessiones excipien-
das se exponit.*²

MEDITATION VII.

THE BLESSED DE LA SALLE.

FIRST POINT. Admire the unity and the variety of the gifts of God in the order of grace as well as of nature. The Church is a moral body that has its life and its organization, quite as the human body: *It is one body and hath many members.*³ As our soul gives life to all our members and employs each of them at its proper functions, so the Holy Spirit animates all the faithful and makes them contribute to the common good, in having each to do that which is according to his endowment: *To each is given a manifestation of the Spirit unto usefulness.*⁴ Each working unto the profit of all, and all profiting by the labor of each, no one has reason to

¹ *Opera spiritualia.*

² *Praxis Confess.*, II, 18.

³ COR., XII, 12.

⁴ I COR., XII, 7.

be jealous of the function of another, nor to be vain-glorious of that which allotted to him. The eye may not say to the hand; "I have no need of thy services." Nor may the head say to the feet; "I can well do without you." Without the eye how will the feet know the path it is to follow? And without the feet how will the eye go in search of what it needs? Far from being useless, the weakest members are often the most essential: *What seem to be the inferior, are the more necessary.*¹ And this is just what may be observed as to the members of the Church. Some are set in high places, others in low. This one here considers, that one acts. This one speaks, that one listens. All this must be to make up a body. Were there no variety, no proportion, no sympathy between the members, the body could neither function nor live. What is the conclusion? This: that the one who has the greatest merit and does the most good, is not he that holds the highest position or figures and shines the most, but rather he that fulfils best the work he was made to do or who is most faithful to the vocation he has received. Let this thought of

¹ I COR., XII, 22.

an Apostle sink into your mind. It is the thought of *the* Apostle. It is the maxim that guided and inspired the Blessed de la Salle and helped him to make of his life an employment both meritorious and fruitful.

SECOND POINT. Three considerations will help to give one a just esteem of his virtue: 1. He accepted, with all good will and cheerfulness, a part in the service of Our Lord that was most humble and disagreeable. 2. He never asked of anyone a sacrifice of which he had not given the example. 3. He opposed only patience to hostility.

1. Everywhere the need of establishing schools for children of the people was felt and priests, who had any zeal and some acquaintance with souls, were disconsolate at beholding in the lower classes their great ignorance of the truths of faith and of the Gospel teachings. They prayed God to raise up a man or men who would provide for this sore need. For so far, scarce anyone had dared to attempt it, and those that had essayed the task yielded the undertaking because of its difficulties. De la Salle resolved to consecrate himself to the work. He freely resolved upon it, through spontaneous zeal

and even in the face of much urging to the contrary. But, to give himself to the enterprise, he had to relinquish an honorable position and turn his back upon a future most flattering in prospect. He saw that it meant the embracing of an austere mode of life, the fore-going of the companionship of relatives and friends, the donning of the meaner vesture of the class among which he was to work, and the passing of his days in the midst of and with men of a social condition inferior to his own, of crude, uncouth ways and mentality and of very imperfect education. These sacrifices did not daunt him. He was willing and prepared to yield any human advantage, comfort, consideration, or the free disposal of his time and strength, should they be required of him in order to train the children of the poor to virtue, to bring them up as children of God and members of Jesus Christ. He wanted only one thing in life, and that was to see these little ones being taught the Christlike way of life, the path to heaven. And for more than forty years he led this life of unflinching self-denial, poverty and mortification. It would be impossible to tell of all that he had to do and to suffer and to bear with in order to found his insti-

tute, to train his novices, and to habituate them to the regular and common life, to maintain them in the practice of obedience, poverty, humility and devotedness which is the very soul of his society. And even a detailed history of his life can indicate but a part of his labors and trials. Few can apply to themselves with as much truth as he these words of the Apostle Paul: *For whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all.*¹ And thus, you see, how men arrive at sanctity. You begin to understand, now, at what cost signal services are rendered to God and to His Church. Do you at all imagine that you can serve your brethren and arrive at the holiness to which you are bound to attain on any other conditions? *Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum.* If you will be God's, then give over living for yourself. However, if anyone purpose to live in unalloyed happiness, lacking nothing that man can have here on earth, in the enjoyment of affection and favor, and to make his way in the world or in the ecclesiastical career, perhaps he will succeed; but, in such case, let him not pretend to any of the merits or to any of the

¹ I COR., IX, 19.

blessings and consolations and good things that are the rewards of the holy ones of God.

2. In the life of the Blessed de la Salle, what is most astonishing, is not that he practised the virtues of humility, poverty and mortification in an heroic degree, but that he was able to find or inspire so great a number of imitators, that he gained such an ascendancy over their minds and hearts as to prevail upon them to embrace a mode of life, even unto death, so contrary to all the inclinations of nature. How did he work this prodigy? By what means did he effect it? By sheer force of example; by practising first, and in a perfect manner, that which he asked of them in God's name and for His love: *Exemplo, non verbo*. His example was enough to draw others on. When they beheld such a priest, a man of the nobility, abandon his position and fortune to live in the same indigence as themselves, these men, born in a lower social condition and without affluence at all, would have been quite ashamed to think their nourishment too austere, or their clothing too poor and mean, their exercises too laborious or too confining. In presence of a dignity of the Church who had renounced his bene-

fice, who came asking to share their society as the least and last among them, who submitted to all the prescriptions of their rule, hardly could they dare to think of lightening the yoke, of desiring more liberty, or coveting any distinction or any authority. Reflecting that he had nothing at heart except the spread of Christ's teaching and sought only to instil it into the hearts and minds of the little ones, without asking or accepting any recompense but the friendship of God in this world and the possession of Him hereafter, how could they think of looking for the esteem or appreciation from men or lay claim to rest and retirement in ease as a reward of their service? All marched in step along the road to perfection, because their chief led the way; they could not falter or fall by the wayside. In fact, there is no secret, or rather none other than this, of leading souls to Christ, of making them ready and willing to undergo sacrifice or of inducing them to strive for perfection. It is the method Our Savior used: *Coepit facere*.¹ It is the one you must adopt, it is the only one you can use with effect if you wish to obtain of those whom you will direct any serious

¹ ACTS I, 1.

effort towards a true Christian life. You will tell them that they must be humble, generous, mortified. They know that as well as you. What they lack is the light, the ardor, the courage, the confidence. They hesitate in the face of hardship. Show you them that their apprehensiveness is vain; that is, do you first and perfectly what they have not the heart or the grit and generosity to undertake of their own initiative. Like your divine Master say to them: *Come, follow me*; or as St. Paul: *What ye have observed in me, that do ye.*¹ Herein you have the means of making them docile and of giving them a relish of whatever you recommend.

3. The work of the Blessed de la Salle aroused opposition quite in the proportion of its importance to the glory of God and its benefit to Society. At certain times, all the world seemed against him. He was reproached with being an innovator, with having the presumption to act of his unaided initiative, with being a trouble maker in the parishes and withdrawing children from the influence of their pastors. His friends charged him with rashness, exaggeration, stubbornness. When hindrances or annoyances

¹ PHIL., IV, 9.

ceased in one place, they presently began in another. The holy man did not let these things either stay or trouble him. He had the assurance that his purposes and designs were of God, and his resolution only waxed the stronger in proportion to the attempts that were made to dishearten or thwart him. His patience never failed him. Without showing indignation, without causing irritation, without even uttering a complaint, he went on with his work as humbly as determinedly, dissipating the spirit of opposition by his forbearance and by his equanimity. Again note that you may take lesson by all this, so that you may be able to accomplish something when you set out to achieve good. If you be zealous, having a desire to toil for God, expect trials and disapproval and opposition. Lay up a store of patience. *Christus non vicit ferro, sed ligno*, says St. Leo. 'Tis thus you are sure to prevail. Of course, the good you do will make others chafe; they will seek to make you suffer for it; but keep your peace; accept the trial and humiliation, be humble, and persevere: *Cleave to God, and endure*.¹ *Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good*.² It is nothing to have undertaken a good work, if one leave it unachieved.

¹ ECCLI., II, 3.² ROM., XII, 21.

THIRD POINT. May the example and experience of the Blessed de la Salle forewarn and forearm you against the illusions that your zeal can occasion. Let his life preserve you from discouragement. Just think upon what that good priest would have lost or forfeited, had he yielded to opposition or recoiled before difficulty or winced at or shrunk from hardship. Think what a loss it would have been for the Church and for souls. The thing that is really of importance, when about to initiate any seeming good work, is to make sure of the will of God. When that is ascertained, it is scarce worth while to be disquieted about the attitude men may take, for then one can count upon the assistance of Heaven, and can say with St. Paul: *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*.¹ This does not mean that one may rest inactive; that one has no need to toil, to give one's self trouble, to use all the resources one may have. No. God wills that His works be achieved; but he wills to have them achieved by and through us. We must, then, prove to be good workmen. Let us exert ourselves, without sparing. Since the issue is our own sanctification and the

¹ PHIL., IV, 13.

eternal benefit of our neighbor, let us put our whole heart into our work; humbling ourselves; mortifying ourselves; making real sacrifices. The kingdom of God suffers violence. But, let us do all with confidence and cheerfulness, ungrudgingly, for we are assured of a happy issue; because we have need only to struggle, to fight, in order to come off with triumph: *Labor as a good soldier of Christ.*¹ *He who hath begun the good work, will perfect it.*² *After you shall have suffered a little, He will perfect you, and confirm you, and establish you.*³

MEDITATION VIII.

THE BLESSED VIANNEY, CURÉ D'ARS.

FIRST POINT. Adore Our Most Holy Savior endeavoring to impart to His Church the spirit of holiness with which His heart is filled. In order to make her pure and without stain, as becomes His Spouse, He has drawn her, says the Apostle, from the mire of sin, and has cleansed her in His Blood. And to perpetuate this holiness among her members,

¹ II TIM., II, 3.

² I PET., V, 10.

³ PHIL., I, 6.

He has left with her means of sanctification all-divine; His words, His sacraments, His mysteries. And that He might make it clear that she is always in union with Him and that she has always the virtue of sanctifying, He has never ceased to raise up saints within her, men of heroic virtue, whose sanctity He makes manifest by supernatural gifts, by prophecy and by miracles: *To one is given the grace of healing, to another that of working miracles; to this one prophecy, to that divers kinds of tongues.*¹ And this in every rank of society and in all conditions of life. Among the members of the priesthood especially, there has been a great number, that is to say, among those who are destined to train others to virtuous living and to give the example of perfect Christian conduct. The Blessed Vianney was of this Order, he whose worth and merit are so signal and whose memory is so much venerated, as it deserves to be, among us of the clergy. Thank and bless Our Lord for the zeal He cherishes for the holiness of His priests and for the edification He affords through them in all His Church. Thank Him for having associated you with them by be-

¹ I COR., XII, 8-10.

stowing on you the priestly character which entitles you to a share in those choice graces which He is pleased to heap upon them. Offer Him a sincere desire of corresponding with His holy purposes, and, after the example of this saintly priest who was so faithful to Him, promise that you will make every effort to profit by His helps and to promote His honor.

SECOND POINT. In regard to the Curé of Ars, there are three things that compel our deepest admiration: 1. How sanctity elevates and ennobles a minister of God: 2. What blessings it draws down upon his endeavors: 3. What honor it does to God and to the Church.

1. Folks have exaggerated the lack of instruction in the Curé of Ars, and also his inaptitude for things of the mind. It is a fact that he had sound judgment and a mind that was solid and not without finesse. But his faculties had scarcely at all been cultivated by study; he had received only a part, and that imperfectly, of the instruction that it was possible to give in seminaries during those first years following the restoration of religious worship. If he had had but ordinary virtue, he would have

merely vegetated in a poor parish as an obscure ecclesiastic; and no one would have dreamed of going to consult with him. But this man was a saint. Knowing wherein he was lacking, he strove to supply the deficiency of his studies by prayer, by reflection, by good reading and by assiduous application to the things that pertained to his vocation. Preaching cost him much; but he regarded it his duty to preach well, and he worked with all his heart. A part of his week was devoted to the preparation of his Sunday instruction; he wrote with care, in his sacristy, in the presence of Our Lord. He did not feel that he had either the wisdom or the knowledge necessary to be a confessor; but, since God had imposed this ministry on him, he set himself to the study of such books of theology as he had at hand and prayed earnestly to his Master to vouchsafe him help and enlightenment. Jesus did for him what He has been pleased to do for a great number of holy priests who lacked the means of instruction. Besides the sudden inspirations that He often gave his humble servant while dealing with penitents, regarding their condition of soul, their needs, the counsel that suited their case, He enlightened his

mind and developed it most remarkably. In a short time this priest's mind and heart and memory were treasures of knowledge, dogmatic, moral, ascetic, whatever his needs required; while his memory, particularly, was replete with edifying anecdotes culled from the lives of saints or from his own personal experience. Little by little, the exercise of his duties became easy to him. In the first years, the preparation of his instruction took long hours and even long days; later on, when his crowded confessional left him scarcely breathing time, he still found in his recollections and his inspirations something that would instruct, interest and edify, not only his parishioners, but as well the strangers more or less well instructed, who came from a distance to hear him. "From whom did you learn what you have just now told us?" he was asked by one of them. "From the Same One who instructed St. Peter," was his reply. Is there not herein a lesson for every priest of God? The knowledge acquired before ordination is but elementary and will quickly fail us. If we will to retain it, to make use of it or to make it of any use, to honor our dignity as priests, we simply must, each and every one of us, cultivate

our minds, continue our studies and enlarge our knowledge. The principles of theology must be seen and re-seen; so, too, must the principles of spirituality; they must be meditated upon in the presence of God; they must be well fixed in our hearts and minds. In this matter of studies, there are ecclesiastics who neglect the necessary, to occupy themselves with things superfluous; they apply themselves to profane things and in a profane spirit. They should be doing just the contrary. They must look after the essentials; study the things that matter in the care of their own souls and of those souls they are bound to care for; in other words, they must go deeper into the things they studied in the seminary, and of which they received only the elements then. They should study to understand the spirit of mental prayer, till the conviction that it is of all things the most needful and the most helpful grip their souls firmly and sensibly. And even though one have but ordinary talent, he can readily acquire a remarkable amount of priestly learning and knowledge and a command of the things he ought to know, superior by far to that of many a cleric who, though having greater facility for ac-

quiring knowledge, has less of wisdom in regard to the things that pertain to his own soul's welfare and to the bettering of his mind and the right ordering of his studies.

2. To what did the Blessed Vianney owe the happiness of having done in his poor parish of Ars incomparably more good than a multitude of priests, intelligent, distinguished, titled, in positions much higher and with parishes vastly more populous? To his holiness of life. Without that, he had done nothing worthy of note. With it, he worked prodigies; things quite unbelievable, were there not still living witnesses to tell of what they have seen. He set out from the beginning to instruct and to sanctify his parish. And anyone that ever visited Ars during his lifetime, was as much struck with the religion of the parishioners as with the virtue of the venerable pastor. He had not only prevailed upon them to rid the place of occasions of sin and brought them to faithfulness in the matter of their chief duties, such as Easter Communion, Sunday observance, daily prayer; he had further established among them the adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the frequentation of the sacraments, daily

assistance at Holy Mass, evening prayer at the church. A certain number he had inspired to strive for higher spirituality. And this was only the beginning. His labor and activity were not slow to increase, for, as soon as his parish began to realize that they were blessed with a saint in their midst, the good folk noised it abroad and before long the whole diocese knew of it. Then began the flocking of the faithful from all sides to see and to hear him. And few there were, who, having heard him, but wanted to open to him their hearts, to ask his counsel and to recommend themselves to his prayers. Before long, all his days were spent in the holy Tribunal: *He was a fountain open to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the washing of sinners:*¹ Pilgrims were many; twenty thousand of them in a single year. All who came to him did not become saints; yet all but the exception made a thoroughly good confession, set their souls in order and in security, and left with good resolutions engraven on their hearts. Many then resolved to give up the world and to embrace the perfect life. No one can pretend to say all the good that came of the

¹ ZACH., XIII, 1.

pilgrimages to Ars during twenty long years. But, think you upon it. Does not the very contemplation of it bestir you; and, if this does not incite to the practice of a perfect priestly life, what conceivable can? If it costs a great deal to become perfect, is it not true that they who have had the courage to essay it, have been well rewarded for their pains, even in this life? One can hardly conceive a life more poor, more laborious, more mortified than that of the priest of Ars: but can you conceive of a happier one, or one more rich in fruits in blessings and in consolations? In the proportion that you share his worth or virtue, you shall have equally a part in his contentment and happiness. Think of the consolation you can have at death, if you have converted, sanctified and placed safe in the hands of God before you a number of precious souls. And ponder over this: the good that you will do in life will never be undone, it will live long after you. Those whom you have made holy will sanctify others, and these others again, and so from generation unto generation!

3. If it is the glory of God to have saints with Him in heaven, it is the honor of Mother Church to

count saints among her members; for, it is the witness to her union with Our Savior, to the purity of her teaching, to the efficacy of her prayers and of her sacraments. This honor is the greater for her in that it belongs to her alone, and that no heretical sect dare claim the like. But who are they that do her the most honor and gain her the most respect and prestige among men? Of all the saints, they are the saintly priests; for she is most often judged by those who represent her, who speak in her name, who are the preachers of her teachings, the dispensers of her mysteries and the ministers of her worship. The thousands of pilgrims who wended their way to Ars, returned thanks to God for the example of perfection the good Curé had given them. They retold with admiration in their own home of the prodigies and of the virtue that they had beheld. They were heard to repeat, in emulation of the cry of St. Anthony on the banks of the Nile: "I have seen Elias in the desert; I have seen Paul in Paradise." And when a holy death had crowned that holy life, and to all the world had been made known the story of so many wonderful works, of superhuman virtues, of inspired words and of

heavenly favors, there went up from all parts a cry of admiration, a chorus of praise, and a holy impatience to invoke publicly him whom all believed they beheld reigning with Jesus Christ in the glory of heaven.

THIRD POINT. Would you, then, do honor to God while yet here below, help the Church, sanctify souls and enjoy ineffable consolations? You see what you are to do. Begin with yourself: take the resolution to become a holy priest. But note this: to be a holy priest, is not merely to avoid, sin, to lead a regular life, to have the confidence of the faithful and the good opinion of superiors. It is to live the life of Saints, to follow them in their practices generally. For all who arrived at sanctity did not trace the same way nor observe the same practices; nor had all the same character. There are, without doubt, those who were as perfect as the Curé of Ars, and never lived in so poor a dwelling as he nor led so austere a life. But all had the Savior's spirit; all shaped their sentiments according to His maxims, and their conduct, too. Who is there who did not begin by renouncing his own will and by making to God the sacrifice of himself; who has not worked

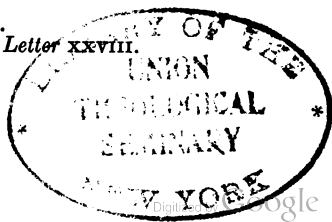
with all earnestness to do unto death the old man within him and to crucify his flesh.¹ This is what all have done before you, and this you must resolve to do, and thus you must begin. According as you do yourself violence, you will make progress in the work which you have set yourself; perfection. Pray to those whose example invites you on, that they will help you by their influence with God; that you, having emulated their lives while it was given you, may merit one day to share with them the eternal reward of a holy priest in heaven: *And so I beseech you in the Lord that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.*² *Quae sursum sunt quaerite, quae sursum sunt sapite, non quae super terram.*³ *Sit gressus ad superiora. Woe to him that goeth down into Egypt! Who goeth thither, goeth down; who goeth down, falleth.*⁴

¹ GAL., v, 24.

² EPHES., iv, 1.

³ COL., iii, 1, 2.

⁴ ST. AMBROSE, *Letter* xxviii.



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